

SCIENCE FICTION MONTHLY

NEW FICTION FROM
ROBERT SILVERBERG
GARRY KILWORTH
ROBERT WELLS
PLUS
AN ILLUSTRATED
REVIEW
OF ROGER DEAN'S
BOOK 'VIEWS'



SCIENCE FICTION
NEW ENGLISH LIBRARY MONTHLY



Introduction

ManCon 5

This year's Easter sf convention will be held in Manchester, hence the name ManCon. From 16 to 19 April a great many sf fans will take over the Owens Park complex at Manchester University and generally convene in the usual sf fashion. Robert Silverberg, the renowned American author, will be the Guest of Honour and to tie in with his visit to these shores we publish a special feature on him in this issue.

Brian Stableford, sf author in his own right and a Silverberg enthusiast, has been looking over the collected works of this author and has come up with an article called *The Metamorphosis of Robert Silverberg*. Indeed, Silverberg has undergone some change of form at least in his role as a novelist, his powers of adaptation have enabled him to write 7,000 words space operas at the drop of a hat and also to produce such outstanding novels as *Son of Man* and *Dying Inside*.

Schwartz . . .

As is the custom in *SFM*, if we tell you something about an author we like to show you an example of his work; 'Schwartz Between the Galaxies' was a Hugo nominee and also a Nebula finalist and Robert Silverberg considers it 'a good representative of my recent work'. Whilst you're reading the story look out for a mention of Ursula Le Guin's father, it helps if you remember what her middle name is.

'Schwartz' isn't the only short story in this issue, we've also got

'Compensating Factor' by Robert Wells and 'Reaching Out' by Garry Kilworth. Readers of *The Sunday Times* may remember that Garry was one of the winners of their recent sf short story competition.

Roger Dean

Back in *SFM* Vol 1 No 11 *The Artist in Science Fiction* interview featured Roger Dean who is, perhaps, the most successful producer of record sleeves on the present music scene. He has produced over fifty album covers for various groups including Osibisa, Paladin, Wizard and Yes. At the time of the interview he was full of the plans for a book of his artwork and his architectural designs which finally appeared in November last year. As so many readers wrote in asking for details of the book we thought it deserved a special illustrated review which you'll find somewhere in this issue.

Next Month

An interview with D G Compton, author of *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe*, *Synthajay* and *Farewell, Earth's Bliss*; a belated report on AussieCon; Robert Holdstock's attempt to explain the myth of the Pied Piper of Hamelin; and plenty of full colour sf art.

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR: PAT HORNSEY
EDITOR: JULIE DAVIS
SUB EDITOR: BILL HOWELL
DESIGNER: CHRISTOS KONDEATIS
PRODUCTION: JERRY GATRELL
CIRCULATION MANAGER: RAY HELLEN

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ROBERT SILVERBERG

is to be the Guest of Honour at this year's Easter sf convention which will be held in Manchester. To tie in with his visit to these shores **SFM** commissioned Brian Stableford, a long-time admirer of Silverberg's work, to prepare an analysis of the author's work and

also managed to arrange first British publication of a new Silverberg story. 'Schwartz Between the Galaxies' was a Hugo nominee last year and also a Nebula finalist; it was selected for **SFM** by Silverberg himself who considers it 'a good representative of my recent work'

Schwartz Between the Galaxies

ROBERT SILVERBERG

This much is reality: Schwartz sits comfortably cocooned – passive, suspended – in a first-class passenger rack aboard a Japanese Air Lines rocket, nine kilometres above the Coral Sea. And this much is fantasy: the same Schwartz has passage on a shining starship gliding silently through the interstellar depths, en route at nine times the velocity of light from Betelgeuse IX to Rigel XX1, or maybe from Andromeda to the Lesser Magellanic.

There are no starships. Probably there never will be any. Here we are, a dozen decades after the flight of Apollo 11, and no human being among they except back and forth across the face of that little O, the Earth, for the planets are barren and the stars are beyond reach. That little O is too small for Schwartz. Too often it glazes for him, turns to a nugget of dead porcelain; and lately he has formed the habit, when the world glazes, of taking refuge aboard that interstellar ship. So what JAL Flight 411 holds is merely his physical self, his shell, occupying a costly private cubicle on a slender 200-passenger vessel, leaving Buenos Aires shortly after breakfast, has sliced westward along the Tropic of Capricorn for a couple of hours and will soon be landing at Papua's Torres Strait. But his consciousness, his *anima*, the essential Schwartzness of him, soars between the galaxies.

What a starship it is! How marvelous its myriad passengers! Down its crowded corridors swarms a vast galaxy of heterogeneous galactic creatures, natives of the worlds of Capria, Arcturus, Altair, Canopus, Polaris, Antares – beings both intelligent and articulate, methane-breathing or nitrogen-breathing or argon-breathing, spiny-skinned or skinned, many-armed or many-headed or altogether incorporeal, each a product of a distinct and distinctly unique and alien cultural heritage. Among these varied folk moves Schwartz, that superstar of anthropologists, that true heir to Kroeber and Morgan and Malinowski and Mead, delightedly devouring their delicious diversity. Whereas aboard this prosaic rocket, this planetlocked stratoperegrine, one cannot tell the Canadians from the Portuguese, the Portuguese from the Romanians, the Romanians from the Irish, unless they open their mouths, and sometimes not always then.

In his reveries he confers with creatures from the Fomalhaut system about a digital circumscription; he tapes the melodies of the Acheronian eye-flick; he learns of the sneeze-magic of Accrus, the sleep-ecstasies of Aikabaran, the asteroid-sculptors of Thuban. Then a smiling JAL stewardess parts the curtain of his cubicle and peers at him, jolting him from one reality to another. She is blue-eyed, frizzy-haired, straight-nosed, thin-lipped, bronze-skinned – a genetic mishmash, your standard twenty-first century-model mongrel human, perhaps Melanesian-Swedish-Turkish-Bolivian, perhaps Polish-Berber-Tatar-Welsh. Cheap intercontinental travel has done its deadly work: all Earth is a crucible, all the gene pools have melted into one indistinguishable fluid. Schwartz wonders about the reactivity of those blue eyes and arrives at no satisfactory solution. She is beautiful, at any rate. Her name is Dawn – O sweet neutral non culture-bound cognomen! – and they have played at a flirtation, he and she, Dawn and Schwartz, at occasional moments of this short flight. Twinkling, she says softly, 'We're getting ready for our landing, Dr Schwartz. Are you're restricted in polarity?'

'I never unfashioned them.'

'Good.' The blue eyes, warm, interested, meet his. 'I have a layover in Papua tonight,' she says.

'That's nice.'

'Let's have a drink while we're waiting for them to unload the baggage,' she suggests with cheerful banality. 'All right?'

'I suppose,' he says casually. 'Why not?' Her availability

bore him: somehow he enjoys the obsolete pleasures of the chase. Once such easiness in a woman like this would have excited him, but no longer. Schwartz is 40 years old, tall, square-shouldered, sturdily, a showcase for the peasant genes of his rugged Irish mother. His close-cropped black hair is flecked with grey; many women find that interesting. One rarely sees grey hair now. He dresses simply but well, in sandals and Socratic tunic. Predictably, his physical attractiveness, both within his domestic stillness and without, has increased with his professional success. He is confident, sure of his powers, and he radiates an infectious assurance. This month alone eighty million people have heard his lectures.

She picks up the faint weariness in his voice. 'You don't sound eager. Not interested?'

'Hardly that.'

'What's wrong, then? Feeling shy, Professor?'

Schwartz shrugs. 'Dreadfully shy. Body like dry bone. Mind like dead ashes.' He smiles, full force, depriving his words of all their weight.

She registers mock anguish. 'That sounds bad,' she says.

'That sounds awful!'

'I'm only quoting Chuang Tzu. Pay no attention to me. Actually, I feel fine, just a little stale.'

'Too many skyports?'

He nods. 'Too much of a sameness wherever I go.' He thinks of a star-bright top-deck bubble-domed Spicans do a twining dance of propitiation to white away the slow hours of nine-light travel. 'I'll be all right,' he tells her. 'It's a date.'

Her hybrid face glows with relief and anticipation. 'See you in Papua,' she tells him, and winks, and moves jauntily down the aisle.

Papua. By cocktail-time Schwartz will be in Port Moresby. Tonight he lectures at the University of Papua; yesterday it was Montevideo, the day after tomorrow it will be Bangkok. He is making the grand cosmic circuit. This is his year: he is very big, suddenly, in an anthropological circle, since the publication of *The Mask Beneath the Skin*. From continent to continent he flashes, sharing his wisdom, Monday in Montreal, Tuesday Veracruz, Wednesday Montevideo, Thursday – Thursday? He crossed the International Date Line this morning, and he does not regret returning to his native land. He is not even sure, though yesterday was surely Wednesday, Schwartz is certain that this is July and the year is 2083, and there are moments when he is not even sure of that.

The JAL rocket enters the final phase of its landward plunge. Papua waits, sleek, virginal, and the world has a glassy again. He lets his spirit drift happily back to the gleaming starship making its swift way across the whirling constellations.

He found himself in the starship's busy lower-deck lounge, having a drink with his travelling companion, Pitkin, the Yale cosmicist. What Pitkin, that coarse, florid little man! With all of real and imaginary humanity to choose from, why had his unconscious elected to make him share this fantasy with such a boor?

'Look,' Pitkin said, winking and leering. 'There's your girlfriend.'

The entry-iris had opened and the Antarean not-male had come in.

'Quit it,' Schwartz snapped. 'You know there's no such thing going on.'

'Haven't you been chasing her for days?'

'She's not "her",' Schwartz said. 'She's not "the". Schwartz said. Pitkin guffawed. 'Such precision! Such scholarship! She's not a her, he says!' He gave Schwartz a broad nudge. 'To you she's a she, friend, and don't try to kid me.'

Schwartz had to admit there was some justice to Pitkin's vulgar innuendoes. He did find the Antarean – a slim yellow-eyed, ebony-skinned upright humanoid, sinuous and glossy, with tapering elongated limbs and a seal's fluid grace – powerfully attractive. Nor could he help thinking of the Antarean as feminine. That attitude was hopelessly culture-bound and species-bound, he knew; in fact the alien had cautioned him that terrestrial sex distinctions were irrelevant in the Antares system, that if Schwartz insisted on thinking of 'her' in genders, 'she' could be considered only the negative of male, with no implication of biological femaleness.

He sat patiently, 'I've told you. The Antarean's neither male nor female as we understand those concepts. If we happen to perceive the Antarean as feminine, that's the result of our own cultural conditioning. If you want to believe that my interest in this being is sexual, go ahead, but I assure you that it's purely professional.'

'Sure. You're only studying her.'

'In a sense I am. And she's studying me. On her native world she has the status-frame of "watcher-of-life", which seems to translate into the Antarean equivalent of an anthropologist.'

'How lovely for you both. She's your first alien and you're her first Jew.'

'Stop calling her her,' Schwartz hissed.

'But you've been doing it!'

Schwartz closed his eyes. 'My grandmother told me never to

get mixed up with economists. Their thinking is muddy and their breath is bad, she said. She also warned me against Yale men. Perverts of the intellect, she called them. So here I am cooped up on an interstellar ship with 500 alien creatures, and one fellow human, and he has to be an economist from Yale.'

'Next trip travel with your grandmother instead.'

'Go away,' Schwartz said. 'Stop lousing up my fantasies. Go peddle your dismal science somewhere else. Use those those Delta Aurigans over there? Climb into their bottle and tell them all about the Gross Global Product.' Schwartz smiled at the Antarean, who had purchased a drink, something that glittered an iridescent blue, and was approaching them. 'Go on,' Schwartz murmured.

'Don't worry, Pitkin said. 'I wouldn't want to crowd you.' He vanished into the molten crowd.

The Antarean said, 'The Capellans are dancing, Schwartz.'

'I'd like to see that. Too damned noisy in here anyway,' Schwartz stared into the alien's vertical-slitted citreous eyes. Cat's eyes, he thought. Panther's eyes. The Antarean's gaze was focused, as usual, on Schwartz' mouth, and other, other customs. He felt a strange, unsettling tremor of desire. Desire for what, though? It was a sensation of pure need, nonspecific, certainly non-sexual. 'I think I'll take a look. Will you come with me?'

The Papua rocket has landed. Schwartz, leaning across the narrow table in the skyport's lounge, says to the stewardess in a low, intense tone, 'My life was in crisis. All my values were becoming meaningless.' She is disconcerted that my chosen profession was empty, foolish, as useless as – as playing chess.'

'How awful,' Dawn whispers gently.

'You can see why. You go all over the world, you see a thousand skyports a year. Everything the same everywhere. The same clothes, the same slang, the same magazines, the same types of architecture and decor.'

'Yes.'

'International homogeneity. Worldwide uniformity. Can you understand what it's like to be an anthropologist in a world where there are no primitives left? Dawn? Here we sit on the island of Papua – you know, head-hunters, animism, body-paint, the drums at sunset, the bone through the nose – and look at the Papuans in their business robes all around us. Listen to them exchanging stock-market tips, talking baseball, recommending restaurants in Paris and barbers in Johannesburg. It's no wonder that Schwartz, in a single century we've transformed the planet into one huge sophisticated plastic western industrial state. The tv relay satellites, the two-hour inter-continental rockets, the breakdown of religious exclusivism and genetic taboo, have mongrelised every culture, don't you see? You visit the Zulus and they have plastic African masks on the wall. You visit the Bushmen and they have Japanese-Made Hopi-motif ashtrays. It's all just so much primitive decoration, and underneath the carefully selected primitive motifs there's the same universal pseudo-American sensibility, whether you're in the Kalahari or the Amazon rainforest. Do you comprehend what's happened, Dawn?'

'It's such a terrible loss,' she says sadly. She is trying very hard to be sympathetic, but he senses she is waiting for him to finish his sermon and invite her to share his hotel room. He will invite her; but there is no stopping him once he has launched into his one great grand idea.

'Cultural diversity is gone from the world,' he says. 'Religion is dead, true poetry is dead, inventiveness is dead, individuality is dead. Poetry. Listen to this.' In a high monotone he chants:

In beauty I walk

With beauty before me I walk

With beauty behind me I walk

With beauty about me I walk

It is finished in beauty

It is finished in beauty

He has begun to perspire heavily. His chanting has created an odd sphere of silence in his immediate vicinity; heads are turning, eyes are squinting. 'Navaho,' he says. 'The Night Way, a nine-day chant, a vision, a spell. Where are the Navaho now? Go to Arizona, and they'll chant for you, yes, for a price, but they don't know what the words mean, and chances are the singers are only one-fourth Navaho, or one-eighth, or maybe just Hopi hired to dress in Navaho costumes, because the real Navaho, if any are left, are off in Mexico City hired to be Aztec. Stop. Stop. Listen.' He chants again, more piercingly than ever before:

The animal runs, it passes, it dies. And it is the great cold.

It is the great cold of the night, it is the dark.

The bird flies, it passes, it dies. And it is . . .

'JAL FLIGHT 411 BAGGAGE IS NOW UNLOADING ON CONCOURSE FOUR,' a mighty mechanical voice cries.

. . . the great cold.

It is the great cold of the night, it is the dark.

'JAL FLIGHT 411 BAGGAGE . . .'

The fish flies, it passes, it dies. And . . .

'People are staring,' Dawn says uncomfortably.

'... ON CONSCIOUS FOUR.'

'Let them stare. Do them some good. That's a Pygmy chant, from Gabon, in equatorial Africa. Pygmies? There are no more Pygmies. Everybody's two metres tall. And what do we sing? Listen. Listen!' He gestures fiercely at the cloud of tiny golden loudspeakers floating near the ceiling. A mush of music comes from them: the current popular favourite. Suddenly he mouths words: '*Star... far... here... near*. Playing in every skyport right now, all over the world.' She smiles thinly. Her hand reaches toward his, covers it, presses against the knuckles. He is dizzy. The crowd, the eyes, the music, the drink. The plastic. Everything shines. Porcelain. Porcelain. The planet vibrates. 'Tom?' she asks uneasily. 'Is anything the matter?' He laughs, blinks, coughs, shivers. He hears her calling for help, and then he feels his soul swooping outward, toward the galactic blackness.

With the Antarean not-male beside him, Schwartz peered through the viewport, staring in awe and fascination at the selective vision of the Capellans colling and recoiling outside the ship. Not all the passengers on this voyage had cosy staterooms like his. The Capellans were too big to come on board; and in any case they preferred never to let themselves be enclosed inside metal walls. They travelled just alongside the starship, basking like slippery whales in the piquant radiations of space. So long as they kept within twenty metres of the hull they would be inside the effective field of the Rabinowitz Drive, which swept ship and contents and associated fellow travellers toward Riegel, or the Lesser Magellanic, or was it one of the Pleiades toward which they were bound at a cool nine lights?

He watched the Capellans moving beyond the shadow of the ship in tracks of shining white. Blue, glossy green, and velvet black, they coiled and swam, and every track was a flash of golden fire. 'They have a dangerous beauty,' Schwartz whispered. 'Do you hear them calling? I do.'

'What do they say?'

'They say, "*Come to me, come to me, come to me!*"'

'Go to them, then,' said the Antarean simply. 'Step through the hatch.'

'And perish?'

'Let them enter into your next transition. Poor Schwartz! Do you love your present body so?'

'My present body isn't so bad. Do you think I'm likely to get another one some day?'

'No?'

'No,' Schwartz said. 'This one is all I get. Isn't it that way with you?'

'At the Time of Openings I receive my next housing. That will be fifty years from now. What you see is the fifth form I have been given to wear.'

'Will the next be as beautiful as this?'

'All the forms are beautiful,' the Antarean said. 'You find me attractive?'

'Of course.'

A slitted wink. A bobbing nod toward the viewport. 'As attractive as those?'

Schwartz laughed. 'Yes. In a different way.'

Coquettishly the Antarean said, 'If I were out there, you would walk through the hatch into space?'

'I might. If they gave me a spacesuit and taught me how to use it.'

'But not otherwise? Suppose I were out there right now. I could live in space five, ten, maybe fifteen minutes. I am there and I say, *Come to me, Schwartz, come to me!* What do you do?'

'I don't think I'm all that self-destructive.'

'To die for love, though! To make a transition for the sake of beauty.'

'No, Sorry.'

The Antarean pointed toward the undulating Capellans. 'If they asked you, you would go.'

'They are asking me,' he said.

'And you refuse the invitation?'

'So far. So far.'

The Antarean laughed an Antarean laugh, a thick silvery snort. 'Our voyage will last many weeks more. One of these days, I think, you will go to them.'

'You were unconscious at least five minutes,' Dawn says. 'You gave everyone a scare. Are you sure you ought to go through with tonight's lecture?'

Nodding, Schwartz says, 'I'll be all right. I'm a little tired, is all. Too many time-zones this week.' They stand on the terrace of his hotel room. Night is coming on, already, here in late afternoon; it is midwinter in the Southern Hemisphere, though the fragrance of the tropic blossoms perfumes the air. The first stars have appeared. He has never really known which star is which. That bright one, he thinks, could be Rigel, and that one Sirius, and perhaps this is Deneb over there. And this? This can be red Antares, in the heart of the Scorpion, or is it only Mars? Because of his collapse at the skyport he has been able to neglect the customary faculty reception and the formal dinner, pleading the need for rest, he has arranged to have a simple snack at his hotel room, *a deux*. In two hours they will come for him and take him to the university to speak. Dawn watches him closely. Perhaps she is worried about his health, perhaps she is only waiting for him to make his move toward her. There's time for all that later, he figures. He would rather talk now. Warming up for the audience, he seizes his first thread.

'For a long time I didn't understand what had taken place. I grew up insular, cut off from reality, a New York boy, bright mind and a library card. I read all the anthropological classics, *Patterns of Culture* and *Coming of Age in Samoa* and *Life of a Primitive* and *The Ancient Tribes* and the rest, and I dreamed of field trips, collecting myths and grammars and folkways and artefacts and

all that, until when I was 25 I finally got out into the field and started to discover I had gone into a dead science. We have only one worldwide culture now, with local variants but no basic divergences: there's nothing primitive left on Earth, and *there are no other planets*. Not inhabited ones. I can't go to Mars or Venus or Saturn and study the natives. What natives? And we can't reach the stars. All I have to work with is Earth. I was 30 years old when the whole thing clicked together for me and I knew I had wasted my life.'

She says, 'But surely there was something for you to study on Earth.'

'One culture, rootless and homogeneous. That's what I work for a sociologist, not for me. I'm a romantic, I'm an exotic, I want



strangeness, difference. Look, we can never have any real perspective on our own times and lives. The sociologists try to attain it, but all they get is a mound of raw indigestible data. In-seight comes later – two, five, ten generations later. But one way we've always been able to learn about ourselves is by studying alien cultures, studying them *completely*, and defining ourselves by measuring what they are that we aren't. The cultures have to be isolated, though. The anthropologist himself corrupts that isolation in the Heisenberg sense when he comes around with his camera and scanners and starts asking questions; but we can compensate, more or less, for the inevitable damage a lone observer causes. We can't compensate when our whole culture collides with another and absorbs and obliterates it. Which we technological-mechanical people now have done everywhere. One day I woke up and saw there were no alien cultures left. Hah! Crushing revelation! Schwartz' occupation is gone!'

'What did you do?'

'For years I was in an absolute funk. I taught, I studied, I

went through the motions, knowing it was all meaningless. All I was doing was looking at records of vanished cultures left by earlier observers and trying to cudgel new meanings. Secondary sources, stale findings: I was an evaluator of dry bones, not a gatherer of evidence. Palaeontology. Dinosaurs are interesting, but what do they tell you about the contemporary world and the meaning of its patterns? Dry bones, Dawn, dry bones. Despair. And then a clue. I had this Nigerian student, this Ibo – well, basically an Ibo, but she's got some Israeli in her and I think Chinese – and we grew very close, she was as close to me as anybody in my own sex, and I told her my troubles. I'm going to give it all up, I said, because it isn't what I expected it to be. She laughed at me and said, 'What right do you have to be upset because the world doesn't live up to your expectations? Reshape your life. You can't reshape the world, I said, but how?' And she said, 'Look inward, find the primitive in yourself, see what made you what you are, what made today's culture what it is, see how these alien streams have flowed together. Nothing's been lost here, only merged. Which made me think. Which gave me a new way of looking at things. Which gave me, on an inward quest. It took me three years to grasp the patterns, to come to an understanding of what our planet has become, and only after I accepted the planet...'

It seems to him that he has been talking for ever. Talking Talking. But he can no longer hear his own voice. There is only a distant buzz.

'After I accepted...'

A distant buzz.

'What was I saying?' he asks.

'After you accepted the planet...'

'After I accepted the planet,' he says, 'that I could begin...'

Buzz. Buzz. 'That I could begin to accept myself.'

He was drawn toward the Spicans too, not so much for themselves – they were oblique, elliptical characters, self-contained and self-satisfied, hard to approach – as for the apparently paradoxical way they took in some sacramental way before the beginning of each of their interminable ritual dances. Each time he had watched them take the drug, they had seemingly made a point of extending it toward him, as if inviting him, as if tempting him, before popping it into their mouths. He felt baited; he felt pulled.

There were three Spicans on board, slender creatures two and a half metres long, with flexible cylindrical bodies and small stubby limbs. Their skins were reptilian, dry and smooth, deep green with yellow bands; but their eyes were weirdly human, large liquid brown eyes, and Leavantine eyes, the eyes of unfortunate mediocrity transformed by enchantment into serpents. Schwartz had spoken with them several times. They understood English well enough – all galactic races did; Schwartz imagined it would become the interstellar *lingua franca* as it had on Earth – but the construction of their vocal organs was such that they had no way of speaking it, and they relied instead on small translating machines hung round their necks that converted their soft whispered hisses into amber words pulsing across a screen.

Cautiously, the third or fourth time he spoke with them, he expressed polite interest in their drug. They told him it enabled them to make contact with the cosmic forces of the universe. He replied that there were such drugs on Earth, too, and that he used them frequently, that they gave him great insight into the workings of the cosmos. They showed some curiosity, perhaps even intense curiosity; reading their eyes was difficult and the tone of their voices gave no clues. He took his elegant leather-sound drug case from his pouch and showed them what he had: leartinitin, psilocerbrin, siddharthin and acid-57. He described the effects of each and suggested an exchange, any of his for an equivalent dose of the shrivelled orange fungoid they nibbled. They conferred. Yes, they said, we will do this. But not now. Not until the proper moment. Schwartz knew better than ask them when that would be. He thanked them and put his drugs away.

Pitkin, who had watched the interchange from the far side of the lounge, came striding fiercely toward him as the Spicans glided off. 'What are you up to now?' he demanded.

'How about minding your own business?' Schwartz said amiably.

'You're trading pills with those snakes, aren't you?'

'Let's call it field research.'

'Research? Research? What are you going to do, trip on that orange stuff of theirs?'

'I might,' Schwartz said.

'How do you know what its effects on the human metabolism might be? You could end up blind or paralysed or crazy or...'

'... or illuminated,' Schwartz said. 'Those are the risks one takes in the field. The early anthropologists who unhesitatingly sampled peyote and yage and ololiquat accepted those risks, and...'

'But those were drugs that *humans* were using. You have no way of telling how – oh, what's the use, Schwartz? Research, he calls it. Research, Pitkin sneered. 'Junkie!'

Schwartz matched him sneer for sneer. 'Economist!'

The house is a decent one, tonight, close to three thousand, every seat in the university's great horseshoe-shaped auditorium taken, and a video relay besides, beaming his lecture to all of Papua and half of Indonesia. Schwartz stands on the dais like a demigod under a brilliant no-glare spotlight. Despite his earlier weariness he is in good form now, going broad and forthright, commanding, voice deep and resonant, words flowing freely. 'Only one planet,' he says, 'one small and crowded planet, on which all cultures converge to a drab and depressing sameness. How sad that is! How tiny we make ourselves, when we make ourselves resemble one another! He flings his arms around. 'Look to the stars, the unattainable stars! Imagine, if you can, the millions of worlds that orbit those blazing suns

beyond the night's darkness! Speculate with me on other peoples, other ways, other Gods. Of every imaginable form, alien in appearance but not grotesque, not hideous, for all things beautiful: beings of many kinds, beings of many sizes, of immense size, of many limbs or of none, beings to whom death is a divine culmination of existence, beings who never die, beings who bring forth their young a thousand at a time, beings who do not reproduce – all the infinite possibilities of the infinite universe!

'Perhaps on each of those worlds it is as it has become here: one intelligent species, one culture, the eternal convergence. But the many worlds together offer a vast spectrum of variety. And now: share this vision with me! I see a ship voyaging from star to star, a spaceliner of the future, and aboard that ship is a sampling of many species, many cultures, a random selection of the galaxy's fantastic diversity. That ship is like a little cosmos, a small world, enclosed, sealed. How exciting to be aboard it, to encounter in that little compass such richness of cultural variation! Now our own world was once like that starship, a little cosmos, bearing with it all the treasures of Earthborn cultures, Hops and Eskimo and Aztec and Kwakiut and Arapesh and Oroko and all the rest. In the course of our voyage we have come to resemble one another too much, and it has impoverished the lives of all of us, because...' He falters suddenly. He feels faint, and grasps the sides of the lectern. 'Because...' The spotlight, he thinks, in my eyes. Not supposed to glare like that, but it's blinding. Got to have them move it. 'In the course...' the course of our voyage...' What's happening? Breaking into a sweat, now. Pain in my chest. My heart? Wait, slow up, catch your breath. That light in my eyes...

'Tell me,' Schwartz said earnestly, 'what it's like to know you'll have ten successive bodies and live more than a thousand years.' 'First tell me,' said the Antarean, 'what it's like to know you'll live ninety years or less, and perish for ever.'

Somehow he continues. The pain in his chest grows more intense, he cannot focus his eyes, he believes he will lose consciousness at any moment and may even have lost it already at least once, and yet he continues. Clinging to the lectern, he outlines the programme he developed in *The Mark Beneath the Skin*. A rebirth of tribalism without a revival of ugly nationalism. The quest for a renewed sense of kinship with the past. A sharp reduction in nonessential travel, especially tourism. Heavy taxation of exported artefacts, including films and video shows. An attempt to create independent cultural units on Earth once again while maintaining present levels of economic and political interdependence. Relinquishment of materialistic technological-industrial values. New searches for fundamental meanings. An ethnic revival, before it is too late, among those cultures of mankind that have only recently shed their traditional folkways. (He repeats and embellishes the point particularly, for the benefit of the Papuans before him, the great-grandchildren of cannibals.)

The discomfort and confusion come and go as he unreeals his themes. He builds and builds, crying out passionately for an end to the homogenisation of Earth, and gradually the physical symptoms leave him, all but a faint vertigo. But a different malaise seizes him as he hears his peroration. His voice becomes, to him, a far-off quacking, meaningless and foolish. He has said all this a thousand times, always to great ovations, but who listens? Who listens? Everything seems hollow tonight, mechanical, absurd. An ethnic revival? Shall these people before him revert to their loincloths and their pig-roasts? His starship is a fantasy; his dream of a diverse Earth is mere silliness. What is, will be. And yet he pushes on toward his conclusion. He takes his audience back to that starship, he creates a horde of fanciful beings for them to compare the metaphor by sketching the structures of half a dozen vanished 'primitive' cultures of Earth, he chants the chants of the Navaho, the Gabon Pygmies, the Ashanti, the Mundugumor. It is over. Cascades of applause engulf him. He holds his place until members of the sponsoring committee come to him and help him down; they have perceived his distress. It's nothing, he gasps. 'The lights... too bright...' Dawn is at his side. She hands him a drink, something cool. Two of the sponsors bring a speech of a reception for him in the Green Room. 'Fine,' Schwartz says. 'Glad to be here. I'll be back to see you in a few hours.' 'My obligation,' he tells her. 'Meet community leaders. Faculty people. I'm feeling better now. Honestly.' Swaying, trembling, he lets them lead him away.

'A Jew,' the Antarean said. 'You call yourself a Jew, but what is that exactly? A clan, a sept, a moiety, a tribe, a nation, what? Can you explain?'

'You understand what a religion is?'

'Of course.'

'Judaism – Jewishness – it's one of Earth's major religions.'

'You are therefore a priest?'

'Not at all. I don't practise Judaism. But my ancestors did, and therefore I consider myself Jewish, even though...'

'It is an hereditary religion, then,' the Antarean said, 'that does not require its members to observe its rites?'

'In a sense,' said Schwartz desperately. 'More an hereditary cultural subgroup, or subtribe, evolving out of a common religious outlook no longer relevant.'

'Ah. And the cultural traits of Jewishness that define it and separate you from the majority of humankind are...?'

'Well...' Schwartz hesitated. 'There's a complicated dietary code, a rite of circumcision for newborn males, a rite of passage for young adolescents, a large number of scriptures in vernacular language that Jews all around the world more or less understand and plenty more, including a certain intangible sense of clanishness and certain attitudes, such as a peculiar self-deprecating style of humour...'

'Can you observe the dietary code? You understand the language of scripture?'

'Not exactly,' Schwartz admitted. 'In fact I don't do anything

that's specifically Jewish except think of myself as a Jew and adopt many of the characteristically Jewish personality modes, which, however, are not uniquely Jewish any longer – they can be traced among Italians, for example, and to some extent among Greeks. I'm speaking of Italians and Greeks of the late twentieth century, for example. Nowadays...' It was all becoming a terrible muddle. 'Nowadays...'

'It would seem,' said the Antarean, 'that you are a Jew only because your maternal and paternal gene-givers were Jews, and, they...'

'No, not quite. Not my mother, just my father, and he was Jewish only on his father's side, but even my grandfather never observed the customs, and...'



'I think this has grown too confusing,' said the Antarean. 'I withdraw the entire inquiry. Let us speak instead of my own traditions. The Time of Openings, for example, may be understood as...'

In the Green Room some eighty or a hundred distinguished Papuans press toward him, offering congratulations. 'Absolutely right,' they say. 'A global catastrophe.' 'Our last chance to save our culture.' Their skins are chocolate-tinted but their faces betray a genetic commonality that is their ancestry – perhaps they call themselves Arapesh, Mundugumor, Tchambuli, Mafulu, in the way that he calls himself a Jew, but they have been liberally larded with chromosomes contributed by Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, Africans, everything. They dress in International Contemporary. They speak slangy, lively English. Schwartz feels seaisick. 'You look dazed,' Dawn whispers. He smiles bravely. Body like a mud. Mind like dead ashes. He is introduced to a tribal chieftain, tall, grey-haired, who looks and speaks like a professor, a lawyer, a banker. What will these people return to the hills for the ceremony of the yam harvest? Will newborn girl-children be abandoned, cords uncult, skins unwashed, if their fathers do not need more girls? Will boys entering manhood submit to the expensive services of the initiator who scarifies them with the teeth of crocodiles? The crocodiles are gone. The Shamans have become stockbrokers.

Suddenly he cannot breathe.

'Get me out of here,' Schwartz mutters hoarsely, choking. Dawn, with stewardess efficiency, chops a path for him through the mob. The sponsors, concerned, rush to his aid. He is floated swiftly back to the hotel in a glistening little bubble-car.

Dawn helps him to bed. Reversing, he reaches for her.

'No, don't have to,' she says. 'You've had a rough day.'

He persists. He embraces her and takes her, quickly, fiercely, and they move together for a few minutes and it ends and he sinks back, exhausted, stupefied. She gets a cool cloth and pats his forehead, and urges him to rest. 'Bring me my drugs,' he says. He wants sidharthin, but she misunderstands, probably deliberately, and offers him something blue and bulky, a sleeping pill, and too weary to object, he takes it. Even so, it seems to be hours before sleep comes.

He dreams he is at the skyport, boarding the rocket for Bangkok, and instantly he is disembarking at Bangkok – just like Port Moreby, only more humid – and he delivers his speech to a horde of enthusiastic Thai, white rockets flicker about him, carrying him to skyport after skyport, and the Thai blur and become Japanese, who are transformed into Mongols, who become Ugians, who become Iranians, who become Sudanese, who become Zambians, who become Chileans, and all look alike, all look alike, all look alike.

The Spicans hovered above him, weaving, bobbing, swaying like cobras about to strike. But their eyes, warm and liquid, were sympathetic: loving even. He felt the glow of their compassion. If they had a language, a code of manners, that he could bother to smile, they would be smiling tenderly, he knew.

One of the aliens leaned close. The little translating device dangled toward Schwartz like a holy medallion. He narrowed his eyes, concentrating as intently as he could on the amber words flashing quickly across the screen.

'... has come. We shall...'

'Again, please,' Schwartz said. 'I missed some of what you were saying.'

'The moment... has come. We shall... make the exchange of sacralements now.'

'Sacralements?'

'Drugs.'

'Drugs, yes. Of course.' Schwartz groped in his pouch. He felt the cool smooth leather skin of his drug-case. Leather? Snakeskin, maybe. Anyhow. He drew it forth. 'Here,' he said. 'Sidharthin, heart-ache, pain-killer, and so on. Take one pill. The Spicans selected three small blue sidharthins. 'Very good,' Schwartz said. 'The most transcendental of all. And now...'

The longest of the aliens proffered a ball of dried orange fungus the size of Schwartz' thumbail.

'It is an equivalent dose. We give it to you.'

'All equivalent to all equivalent of my tablets, or to one?'

'Equivalent. It will give you peace.'

Schwartz smiled. There was a time for asking questions, and a time for unhesitating action. He took the fungus and reached for a glass of water.

'Wait! Pitkin cried, appearing suddenly. 'Are you...'

'Too late,' Schwartz said serenely, and swallowed the Spican drug in one jolly gulp.

The nightmares got on and on. He circles the Earth like the Flying Dutchman, like the Wandering Jew, skyport to skyport to skyport, an unending voyage from nowhere to nowhere. Obliging committees meet him and convey him to his hotel. Sometimes the committee members are contemporary types, indistinguishable from one another, with standard faces, standard clothing, the all-purpose neo-modern hybrid unihuman, and sometimes they are consciously ethnic, elaborately decked out in feathers and paint and tribal emblems, but their faces, too, are standard behind the gaudy regalia, their stance is the same. Uganda and Tierra del Fuego and Nepal, and it seems to Schwartz that these masqueraders are, if anything, less authentic, less honest, than the other sort, who at least are true representatives of their era. So it is hopeless either way. He shakes at his pillow, he groans, he wakens. Instantly Dawn's arms envelop him. He sobers incoherent phrases into their clavic and the murmurs soothing sounds against his forehead. He is having some sort of breakdown, he realises: a new crisis of values, a shattering of the philosophical synthesis that has allowed him to get through the last few years of his life without the wheel; he spins, he spins, he spins, traversing the continents, getting nowhere. There is no place to go. No. There is, one just one, a place where he will find peace, where the universe will be as he needs it to be. To there, Schwartz. Go and stay as long as you can. 'He tears off the top of his head. 'Dawn! Dawn! Dawn! Dawn! Dawn! He shakes his head. 'Go there,' she says, and gives him some sort of pill. Another tranquiliser. All right. All right. It will help him get where he must go. The world has turned to porcelain. His skin feels like a plastic coating. Away, away, to the ship. To the ship! 'So long,' Schwartz says, and lets himself slip away.

Outside the ship the Capellans twist and spin in their ritual dance as, weightless and without mass, they are swept toward the rim of the galaxy at nine times the velocity of light. They move with a grace that is astonishing for creatures of such tremendous bulk. A dazzling light that emanates from the centre of the universe strikes their glossy skin, and rebounding, resonates all up and down the spectrum, splintering into brilliant steamers of ultra-red, infra-violet, x-ray-yellow. All the cosmos glows and shimmers. A single perfect note of music comes out of the remote distance and, growing closer, swells in an infinite crescendo. Schwartz trembles at the beauty of all he perceives. Besides the music, he stands under his black Antarean – definitely she, no doubt of it, she – plucks at his arm and whispers, 'Will you go to them?'

'Yes. Yes, of course.'

'Now I'll. Wherever you go.'

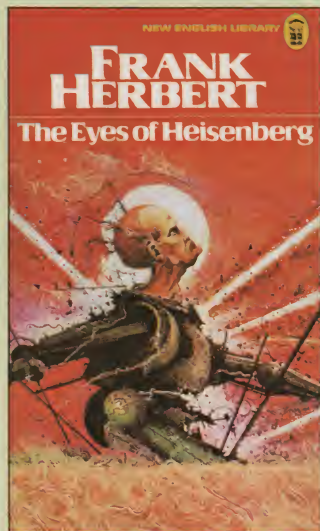
'Now,' Schwartz says. He reaches for the lever that opens the hatch. He pulls down. The side of the starship swings open.

The Antarean looks deep into his eyes and says blissfully, 'I have never told you my name. My name is Dawn.'

Together they float through the hatch into space.

The blackness receives them gently. There is no chill, no pressure, no sound. The Antarean is surrounded by luminous surges, by throbbing mantles of pure colour, as though he has entered the heart of an aurora. He and Dawn swim toward the Capellans, and the huge beings welcome them with deep glad booming cries. Dawn joins the dance at once, moving in simple, graceful, the extravagant ease. Schwartz will do the same in a moment, but first he turns to face the starship, hanging in space close by him like a vast copper needle, and in a voice that could shake universes he calls, 'Come, friends! Come, all of you! Come dance with us! And they come, pouring through the hatch, the Spicans first, then all the rest, the infinite multitudes of beings, the travellers from Fornalhar, from Achernar and Acrux and Aldebaran, from Thuban and Arcturus and Altair, from Polaris and Canopus and Sirius and Rigel, hundreds of star-creatures spilling happily out of the vessel, bursting forth, all of them, even Pitkin, poor little Pitkin, everyone, all the beings, the mantles and tendrils and whatever, forming a great ring of light across space, everyone locked in a cosmic harmony, everyone dancing. Dancing. Dancing. ☺

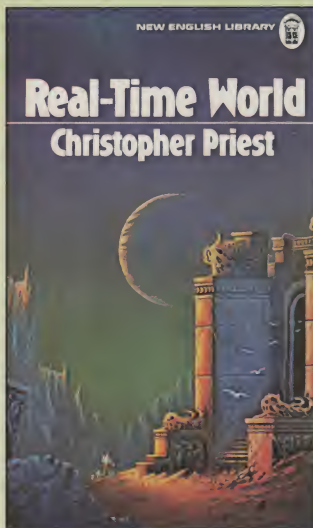
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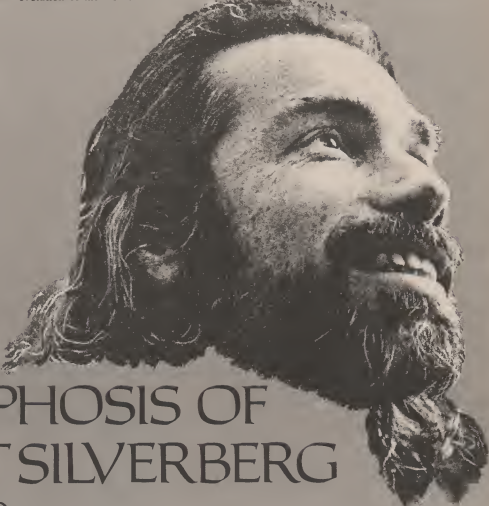


Robert Silverberg has been the most prolific science fiction writer of the past two decades. A bibliography published in 'The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction' in April 1974 credits him with more than 200 books published between 1955 and 1972. It also credits him with more than sixty non-fiction books, more than two hundred uncollected short stories and with the editorship of some twenty-odd anthologies. There remains a great deal of work which did not fall within the scope of the bibliography, and Silverberg's total published wordage between those years ran into the tens of millions. He was, in April 1974, not yet 40 years old.

Silverberg's productivity is without parallel, but no less phenomenal has been the dramatic change which has overtaken his writing in the last ten years.

He began his writing career in the sf field, selling the short story 'Gorgon Planet' to the British magazine 'Nebula' in 1954

and attaining an awesome sales record in the years 1956-58. In 1959 he virtually abandoned the shrinking sf market in favour of a host of others which, between them, could keep up with productivity. In the next seven years a handful of novels appeared, but these were mostly derived from old material. In the late Sixties he began again to regard sf as one of his primary working media (the other being non-fiction of high quality), but the Silverberg who thus returned to the field was by no means the Silverberg who had left it. His work – and his own attitude to his work – had undergone a considerable change. An account of the metamorphosis in personal terms was published in 'Foundation' 7/8 (March 1975) and in the collection of autobiographical essays by sf writers 'Hell's Cartographers' edited by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson. What follows is an account of the evolution of the work.



THE METAMORPHOSIS OF ROBERT SILVERBERG

BY BRIAN STABLEFORD

The bulk of Silverberg's early work was written very easily, and reads very easily. Most of his early short stories are puzzle-stories in which people become involved with unlikely situations (usually featuring unlikely aliens) and obtain a resolution with an altogether-too-likely clever twist. Many other writers were producing similar stories; Robert Sheckley, perhaps, being the most adept in the type. Like Sheckley, Silverberg specialised in a casual irony, but while Sheckley's man-alien encounters always tended to the comical, and in later years became outrightly farcical, Silverberg retained a slightly darker shade of comedy. When the turn-around came and the biters were bitten, they were bitten good and hard.

In one of the most frequently reprinted stories of the period, 'Absolutely Inflexible', the protagonist is the man with the job of condemning all arriving time-travellers to the moon to protect a disease-free Earth from possible infection. Inevitably, he begins to tinker with a confiscated time machine, and winds up looking at himself from the wrong side of the desk. In other similarly-patterned stories, though, there is a distinct bitterness which undermines the calculated triviality of the form. In 'Eve and the 23 Adams' a starship captain is tricked by a girl who signs on as 'crew girl' under false pretences, only wanting a free ride to a colony in space. The captain beguiles her into fulfilling her function unawares, but finds when the ship reaches its destination that she is his son's intended bride. In 'Warm Man' an empathic 'leech' is sustained by the emotional troubles of his neighbours – until he encounters a small boy who has more troubles than he can take, and the power to broadcast them powerfully.

Characters in gimmick-stories do not always fall victim to their own failings, sometimes they are simply fall-guys too innocent to know that the universe will always cheat them. Silverberg wrote 'Schlemiel stories' of this variety, too. But there is a darker aspect to the same fatalistic conviction. In 'Ozymandias' archaeologists, working on an alien world trying to make sense of the ruins of a once-great civilisation, find a robot who can tell them all they want to know. But he can also inform the military wing of the expedition concerning the weapons with which the civilisation destroyed itself. The presentation here is sombre; written in the shadow of the H-bomb, its irony was not so funny. In the same year (1958) Silverberg published 'Road to Nightfall', perhaps the most impressive of his earliest stories (it had been written several years before), but quite atypical of his mass-produced fiction. It describes social decay in a city whose food supplies are cut off in the aftermath of a war. Its ruthless conviction stands in contrast not only to the triviality of Silverberg's other work, but also to the committed triviality of the market to which the mass-produced stories were slanted. The demands of the market were that ingenuity should triumph, whether it was the ingenuity of the

author in designing stories like mousetraps whose final brutal snap could be excused by the principle of poetic justice, or the ingenuity of the character in cancelling problems one against another and averting disaster by a slick, superficial cleverness making light of any sober implications a story might contain.

The early Silverberg was an intelligent writer with an active mind, and he could produce a good line in slick, superficial cleverness. A good example is the novel *Master of Life and Death*, where the central character is faced with a quickfire sequence of problems which sustain him in furious action as he first juggles with them and finally, with brilliant sleight-of-mind, makes them all vanish. World and hero alike tremble on disaster throughout: Earth has a population problem, the protagonist is bending the rules, aliens are interfering with the space programme and someone has invented an immortality serum which can only make things worse. The author's hand, however, is incomparably quicker than the eye, and the problems disappear.

Such conjuring tricks gave Silverberg's best early work readability and interest, but as his productivity increased he came to rely more and more on the routines of pulp cliché, in which heroes are moved through a potentially infinite series of standard scenarios until a *deus ex machina* can be evoked to tidy up. Many space operas, often produced under pseudonyms (*Starhaven* as Ivar Jorgenson, *Aliens from Space* as David Osborne, *The Plot Against Earth* as Calvin M Knox etc) follow this pattern.

Two novels: *Recalled to Life* and *Invaders from Earth* raised issues deserving serious consideration (the possibility of the medical revival of the dead and the manner in which advertising methods may be used to manipulate public opinion) and did not skip so lightly over their implications. Science fiction provides, at least potentially, a framework within which hypothetical questions of this nature may be explored, and the headlong gallop of social and scientific progress which carries us all space into the future makes it necessary that such questions *ought* to be explored in whatever frameworks are available. In *Recalled to Life*, especially, Silverberg exhibited a degree of insight rare among his contemporaries, and this remains the most interesting of his early novels, but in both books the plot acts in opposition to the theme. *Recalled to Life*, like *Master of Life and Death*, moves too quickly to a conjuring trick denouement whose neatness trivialises its impact, while *Invaders from Earth* relies heavily on the methodology of pulp melodrama.

The books are exciting: they involve the reader. Will our hero, by submitting voluntarily to death and revival, get the good publicity required to make resurrection acceptable to the people? Will our hero, having put the public in the right frame of mind to accept the genocide of the Ganymede aliens, manage to thwart the villains and save them after all? The questions are set up so as to tug at the puppet-strings of the reader, but the trouble

is that such tugging works because it conforms to a tried and tested pattern. There is little room for deviation or for innovation, and the competent writer is trapped by his own professionalism. When the end of Silverberg's work in the sf field came to an end in 1958, it could not be said that he was anything more than competent. He had been voted a Hugo in 1956 'the most promising new writer', but had hardly begun to fulfil that promise.

Outside science fiction, in the *genre* wilderness where Silverberg produced anything and everything for seven years, he was able to exploit his casual extravagance to the full. The problem of developing hypothetical questions did not arise, and there was just as little scope for innovation in the content of the work as there was in the method.

Of the science fiction novels which appeared during the years 1959-66 some were inflated short stories and others pure hackwork. One or two (*Collision Course* and *See of Earth*), especially, were earnest in their confrontation of central issues but fell conspicuously between two stools: they lacked the pace and neatness of the best early novels, but had little real depth to compensate. Several short stories however, and especially two published in 1963, were exceptional.

The Pain Peddlers is a bitter-bit story whose construction is reminiscent of the early work, but with a vicious twist hitherto unrevealed. An executive for the media has the job of persuading people in need of costly operations to forgo anaesthetic so that their pain can be broadcast to a sensation-hungry public. One such operation – a colossal success from the point of view though the patient dies – leads to his being attacked by the victim's son, and injured so badly that he himself needs an operation. The rest follows logically. The story has less in common with the straightforward irony of 'Absolutely Inflexible' than with the bitterness of 'Warm Man'. The warm man faced on the troubles of others but was destroyed because the world had far more trouble than he could handle. In 'The Pain Peddlers' it is the multitude who feed on trouble, and it is their demand which puts too much pressure on the supply. In this kind of reversed perspective there is a clue to the nature of the change which was overtaking Silverberg's writing.

The second story, 'To See the Invisible Man', was the best piece Silverberg had produced to date. Its protagonist is punished for repeated transgressions of the law by expulsion from society: he is declared 'invisible'. The condition, he finds, has both advantages and disadvantages: he can steal or play the *voyeur* without interference, but he cannot get medical help and is cut off from all human intercourse. In a sense, he is godlike in his ability to interfere mischievously in the ordered lives of others, but he is also totally vulnerable – if he goes too far, 'accidents' may happen. In the end, it is the torment of being unable to communicate which triumphs over all other aspects of the situation, and his torture is complete when even another invisible man refuses to recognise him. When his sentence ends, he is approached by that same invisible man, who has by now learned what the other man had learned and pleads for recognition in his turn. After an agonised moment of decision he embraces the man, and goes to trial facing probable condemnation for a second time.

The situation at the end of 'To See the Invisible Man' permits the invocation of the same irony so characteristic of Silverberg's early work, but it is rejected. The theme destroys the method, and the actual meaning of what is happening in the story forbids its trivialisation. The mousetrap is un sprung, the invisible man does not turn away to confirm the neatness of situation and system, and the implications of the central idea are left naked. Silverberg invites the reader to be more interested in the problems of the character than those of the story itself.

The role of the protagonist in Silverberg's fiction after 1963 is generally different from the roles characteristic of his early work. In the early work the protagonist is usually either a Schlemihl, falling victim to the story's hidden trap, or a hero, whose task it is to conjure solutions out of his problematic debris. After 1963 the heroes are often victims, and the victims are often heroes.

A good example of the new ambivalence may be found in the short story 'Halfway House' (1966) in which the obvious irony superficiality is again subverted. A man suffering from terminal cancer is called upon to justify his claim to prolonged life before he is allowed to use an alien transport system to visit a world where his illness can be cured. The price asked from him is five years service in the transport network; he finds himself assigned to the Halfway House as the selector who must decide on the claims with which other men seek to justify their use of the system. Like the invisible man, he finds himself in a quasi-godlike situation (a master of life and death) but finds the exercise of the power an intolerable burden on his conscience. He is not given the opportunity to juggle with a host of problems and dilemmas with which the victim of the narrative was the protagonist of the early novel, but must simply live with his vulnerability to sympathy for other men's troubles.

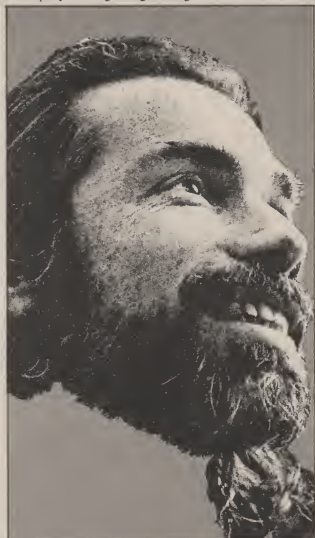
By 1965 Silverberg was in the process of changing his methods. He cut production and began devoting much attention to certain particular works – to non-fiction works which were impressive works of scholarship (*The Great Wall of China* and *The Golden Dream*) and to some of his science fiction.

He found it impossible to maintain a punishing schedule and simultaneously devote a great deal of thought to his work; he fell ill as a result of driving himself too hard. With this in mind, however, he began to fulfil his real potential. He produced the series of stories making up the book *To Open the Sky*, in which the architects of a religious movement use the power of faith to manipulate human history, instituting genetic selection for spiritual powers and staging a Messianic rebirth of mankind to the metaphorical rebirth of mankind in achieving interstellar travel. He also produced *The Time Hoppers*, in which he built one of

his earliest idea stories ('Hopper') into a craftsman-like novel. His major work of the period, however, consisted of two new novels of startling quality: *Thorns* and *Hawksbill Station* (also known as *The Anvil of Time*). All these books, and several others, were published in 1967.

Thorns follows up the theme of 'The Pain Peddlers' but builds around an emotional core which has a lot in common with 'To See the Invisible Man'. Duncan Chalk is the pain peddler who feeds himself and markets for the world the suffering of his chosen victims. The victims of the novel are Minner Burris and Lona Kelvin, two people forced by circumstance into states of extreme alienation, who are brought together by Chalk for a brief and tragic love affair. Burris has been stripped of his humanity by alien beings who have literally alienated him by surgery. It is also in the literal sense that Lona has been stripped of something essential to her identity, in that she has been removed from her body but has been used in a massive experiment in test-tube breeding. In the conclusion, their love transcends the script which Chalk provides, and they destroy the vampiric being, hitting back through him at the world which oppresses them. ('They want to devour us,' says Burris, at one point. 'They want to put us in the freak show.' 'They are everybody.') Though love triumphs over evil it is not the happiness of the ending which is remarkable, but its fierceness. *Thorns* is an emotionally violent book. No pulp clichés move its plot and there is no elegant sleight-of-mind about the resolution. The concern of the novel, mechanically as well as thematically, is the predicament of its hero-victims, elaborating, exaggerating and analysing the quality of their alienation.

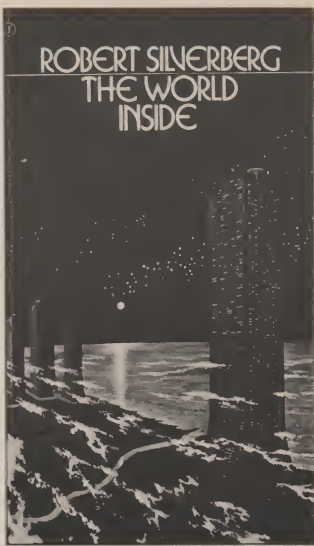
Hawksbill Station, by contrast, is a book drained of all emotional drama. It is neither elaborate nor exaggerated, but its analysis of the state of alienation which is established for the characters by the hypothetical situation cuts much deeper. The station is a place of exile for political dissidents expelled from a near-future USA. It is located in the late Cambrian, and so far as its occupants are aware there is no question of return. Barrett, 'king' of the station, is tortured by a physical injury and by the memory of his betrayal. One prisoner is building a woman out of rags and fragments of Cambrian crustacea and another is conducting experiments in psychical research, trying to escape by breaking through to a higher level of consciousness



transcending time and the Hawksbill equations which make their exile absolute. When a new arrival in the camp begins writing reports on the possibility of rehabilitating the inmates, there is no way for the others to know whether he is reacting to his circumstances by manufacturing a convenient illusion (as they are) or whether a real possibility of release now exists. So far as Barrett is concerned, in fact, the question of release no longer seems important – but there is a wider context in which the ultimate prison might thus be transformed into the first outpost beyond a gateway to infinity.

These novels belonged to an entirely new form of Silverberg's work. Science fiction, by its very nature, is the perfect medium for pulp romance; its vocabulary of ideas provides limitless possibilities for adventurous confrontation and the resolution of conventionally impossible situations by conventionally impossible means. It also provides the natural medium for the hypothetical exploration of real possibilities. In his earlier years, Silverberg had written both kinds of sf, his mass-produced hackwork being typical pulp romance, while *Recalled to Life*, 'Road to Nightfall' and others belonged to the second category. Both these exercises are primarily concerned with the mechanics of plotting, while characterisation is secondary and often neglected altogether.

But science fiction can also be used in a different way: as a

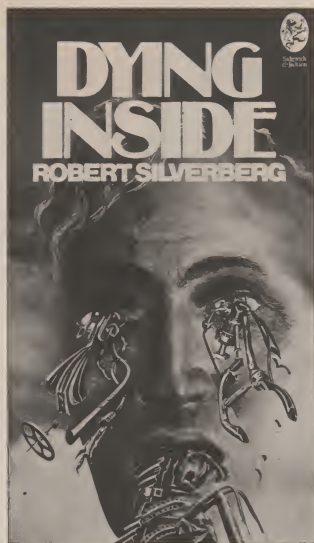


means of imaginatively exploring situations which are directly related to reality. In this case the vocabulary of ideas becomes not a reservoir of commercial fantasies or a construction kit for imaginative hypotheses, but a means of exploring metaphors. (To draw a simple analogy in order to make this clearer, Aesop's fables use animal stereotypes as a vocabulary of metaphors. The fables are neither fantasies nor explorations of real possibility – they present general principles applicable to real situations in dramatic guise. The fables are, of course, didactic, but a vocabulary of metaphors may also be used analytically, not to tell people what to do in certain situations but to try and define by analogy exactly what is happening.)

In 'To See the Invisible Man', *Thorns* and *Hawksbill Station* Silverberg uses science fictional ideas to dramatise situations of extreme alienation. What is present in the real world as a feeling (the sensation of being remote from other people; the concept of essential humanity being eroded by the impersonality of modern living; the paradox of the self's omnipotence within the universe of the mind and its sometimes-horrifying vulnerability in the universe at large) is made real in these stories. The invisible man is remote from his fellows, omnipotent and yet vulnerable. Burris is an alien being. Lona Kelvin has been robbed of something essential by a world in which she has become the remainder of a socio-scientific experiment. Barrett is required to survive in an environment depleted of virtually all human contact and meaning. These exercises are not primarily concerned with the mechanics of plotting but with the human predicament, and characterisation becomes all-important.

The same characters recur in Silverberg's work of the following year. In 'Flies', Silverberg's contribution to *Dangerous Visions* and in the novel *The Man in the Maze* Minner Burris, with a slight change in the manner of his alienation by the aliens, crops up again under different names. The first story has the familiar ironic twist, but with the new agony instead of the old dry humour. In the second the central character compounds his alienation by retiring to the centre of a great maze where he is unreachable as well as intolerable. Silverberg looked at the question in many ways, and explored many possible resolutions. In *Thorns* the traditional answer – love – is put forward for consideration, while in *Hawksbill Station* and *The Man in the Maze* there are more rational, if less hopeful, reconciliations. In 'Flies' there is no answer; the victim is irrevocably trapped. And so it is in 'Passengers', a Nebula-winning short story in which people are the helpless victims of periodic infestations by aliens who take over and use their bodies as they please.

The same period belong to *To Live Again* and *The Masks of Time* (also known as *Vornan-19*); two novels which are hypothetical in character rather than metaphorical. The former is strongly plotted, and has a theme reminiscent of *Recalled to Life*, featuring a world in which mind-tapes provide the means for the dead to be resurrected as parasites upon the living. That this theme is closely allied to Silverberg's new universe of discourse is evident in the fact that the idea of putting two minds in one skull was used to dramatise the alienated condition in a later novel, *The Second Trip*. *The Masks of Time* is, by contrast, all but devoid of plot. It is a curious novel describing the activities of a time-tourist who comes to observe the apocalyptic climax to the twentieth century and becomes a part of it in a quasi-Messianic fashion. The strategy of using a 'man of the future' as an 'objective' observer to provide a commentary on our own time is also as classical a method as science fiction boasts (see Grant Allen's *The British Barbarians*, John Beresford's *Hampshire Wonder*, Olaf Stapledon's *Odd John*, etc) but Silverberg used it not as a vehicle for social comment and



criticism but as a symbol of rebirth. The time traveller returns back to a 'Time of Sweeping' which makes it clear that our world is doomed, but he attempts to infect the world with his own Utopian vision, and he is himself the incarnate proof of human regeneration. This book is particularly significant in that the myth of rebirth and regeneration is one which has natural links to the problem of alienation – and the forging of that link was to become the predominant concern of Silverberg's subsequent work.

Despite his illness in 1966 Silverberg was still producing books at a phenomenal rate in 1967. In February of 1968, however, he was interrupted by disaster when his house burned down and he lost almost all of the apparatus of his life. The house was as rebuilt, but Silverberg was led to write in his autobiographical essay: 'I was never the same again. Until the night of the fire I had never... been touched by the real anguish of life... The fire and certain other dark events some months earlier had marked an end to my apparent immortality to life's pain, and drained from me, evidently forever, much of the bizarre energy that had allowed me to write a dozen or more books of high quality in a single year.'

He began again. For a novella collection on the theme of man's vulnerability to technological disaster he wrote 'How it was When the Past Went Away', about an epidemic among the which forces a city's inhabitants to start their lives all over. He also produced the novella 'Nightwings', a nostalgic, almost lyrical, return to the exotic backgrounds of his old *Science Fiction Adventures* space operas, but with a sober plot which was transformed in two sequels, 'Perris Way' and 'To Jorslem', first into a study of alienation and then into a myth of rebirth. A Watcher, whose task it is to warn Earth of alien invasion, cannot rouse effective opposition when it comes. The aliens take over Earth and he becomes a stranger in the world they are beginning to change. Ultimately, however, the invasion paves the way for a human renaissance, and the Watcher undergoes transcendental metamorphosis into a quasi-angelic being.

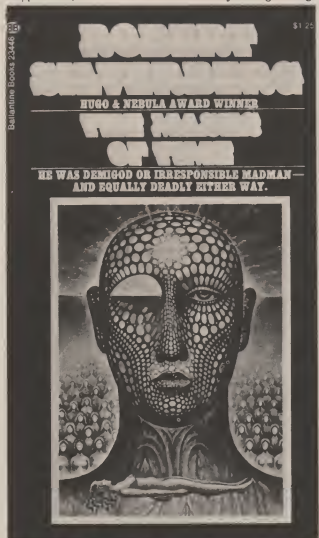
It was also shortly after the fire that he wrote the superb short story 'Sundance', in which the morality of colonialism and the possibilities inherent in human contact with alien beings are explored in a compact and elegant piece of prose where co-existent alternative realities show the issue from several perspectives. The same question became the starting point for the novel *Downward to Earth*, a tour de force which brought together many of the threads of his past work. Its hero, Gunderson, returns to the planet Belazgor with the idea of atoning in some way for the cruelties which he was party to imposing upon the natives, who were once enslaved but have been recognised as 'people'. One particular crime which haunts him is the fact that he once prevented seven of the aliens from going to the ritual rebirth which forms the core of their religion and their life. He ultimately follows the path to rebirth himself, cured by one of the seven and aided by another, to become a new kind of being, at once human and alien. Symbolically, at least, this was the most satisfactory solution Silverberg found to the problems that now concerned him. It is, however, not too difficult to design surrealist and symbolic solutions to real problems.

The motif of transcendental transfiguration as an 'answer' to the pain implicit in the human condition is, of course, central to most forms of religious belief – and in particular to the Christian doctrine of personal salvation. The influence of the Christian stories is evident in such books as *The Marks of Time* and *Nightwings*, but in *Tower of Glass*, the novel which followed *Downward to Earth*, it becomes overt. The novel draws a parallel between Simeon Krug, who is trying to make contact

with the infinite universe beyond Earth via a great tower intended to beam and receive messages to and from other worlds, and Thor Watchman, an android to whom Krug himself (the creator of the androids) is both deity and hope of salvation. When Krug discovers the secret religion of the androids, with himself as its godhead, and tells Watchman that in his eyes androids are mere things (products unworthy of any special consideration) he destroys Watchman's hopes. The android retaliates by destroying the tower, and condemning Krug's hopes.

The surrealist novel *Son of Man* was a logical outgrowth of this climate of thought. The world in which the book is set is not the physical planet Earth but the Earth of human perception – the model world of the mind. It takes place not in a future of extrapolated possibility but in a future of psychological potential. Sensations are incarnated as landscape; there are places called *Old, Heavy and Slow*. Modes of psychological orientation become alternative human species: *slimmers, awalters, destroyers*. The protagonist watches the ceremony of the Five Rites, culminating in the Shaping of the Sky, but his presence upsets the progress of the rites and he is referred by a being called Wrong to the Well of First Things, where he is called upon to forsake his alienated isolation and accept the whole burden of humanity. Here, the author has abandoned even his metaphorical structures, and is experimenting with pure symbolism.

In two novels which followed *Son of Man* Silverberg developed a new direction of approach to his central concern. *The World Inside* and *A Time of Changes* focus not on the state of alienation but on the kind of circumstances which generate alienation. The first deals with an overpopulated world whose citizens are gathered into superskyscraper Urbmons, forced to live in such close association with one another that social relationships disintegrate under the strain. The second deals with an alien society in which communication, especially emotional communication, is a sin. One may regard *The World Inside* as a metaphorical exaggeration of modern city life, and *A Time of Changes* as a metaphorical exaggeration of contemporary social contention. But there are no symbolic transcendental solutions here: from the World Inside there is no escape at all, while the hero of *A Time of Changes* clings



desperately but hopelessly to the traditional solution that love can triumph over any adversity.

This particular aspect of Silverberg's work culminated in a return to quasi-mysticism in the novel *The Book of Skulls*, in which four characters are weighed and minutely examined in terms of their formation by and their relationship with the environment. The metaphor is stripped from the situation – the world of the book is contemporary America – but is retained in the goal which is described so as to provide a set of rules for the interaction of the characters one with another. There is a promise that the 'winners' in the game may achieve immortality, but only on special terms.

While *The Book of Skulls* summed up Silverberg's study of the forces causing alienation, *Dying Inside* summed up his extensive exploration of the state of alienation. Again, the imaginative component is stripped down to a single definitive metaphor. The world of the book remains contemporary America, but the protagonist, David Selig, is a receptive telepath. His talent gives him godlike powers of perception and understanding, but he remains ultimately vulnerable in the face of what he perceives and understands. The central paradox of the problem of alienation is hardly capable of more elegant dramatisation. Within the book we are offered the predicament of Kafka's heroes as a standard for comparison, but it has much

closer parallels with Sartre's *Nausea*. The plot of the novel is consummately simple: Selig is losing his talent, losing his ability to understand his fellow men and in so doing becoming like a case, losing his alien-ness. The central issue is starkly clear: is it a case of heads they win, tails he loses? Can the 'death' of his present self, his 'metamorphosis', really provide a 'rebirth' into the human world?

The Book of Skulls and *Dying Inside* completed a phase in Silverberg's career; together they constitute a kind of punctuation mark. In order to display the context in which this work may, in my opinion, be best understood, I do not mention a number of other works also published between 1967 and 1972. Although this work is, for the most part, outside the developing core of his work, it is not necessarily inferior. There are a number of other stories which construct situations which are metaphors of alienation: some of them, like the time-paradox novel *Up the Line* and the short stories 'Caliban' and 'The Reality Trip', are much lighter in treatment and recover a wryness usually associated with his older work. Others fit closely into the scheme I have mapped out but seem to be adjuncts to it – the brilliant novella 'In Entropy's Jaws' is thematically related to *Son of Man*, while *The Second Trip* forms a bridge between *To Live Again* and *Dying Inside*, following up the idea of two minds in one body while developing the idea of the receptive telepath as an archetype of the alienated man at a much more sophisticated level than 'Warm Man'. There still remain two first class juvenile novels (*Gate of Worlds* and *Across a Billion Years*) and much more short work, including two award winners ('Good News From The Vatican' and 'The Feast of St Dionysus').

More recently, Silverberg's output has decreased drastically. He has written very little in the last three years, content for the most part to amuse himself now with short stories which toy with ideas as he did at the beginning of his career. He now does so, of course, with a considerable degree of artistry, and has produced such gems as 'Schwartz Between the Galaxies' – the story of an anthropologist in a future Earth tending more and more to cultural uniformity, who fantasises about the possibilities implicit in the concept of an infinite universe filled with alien cultures. In two major works, 'Born with the Dead'



and *The Stochastic Man* he has extended the pattern of his post-1968 work slightly, but it seems that it is no longer the metaphorical qualities of the central ideas which interest him so much as their philosophical implications. Though *The Stochastic Man* is superficially *Dying Inside* in reverse – it concerns a man slowly cultivating a new mental power (precognition) instead of losing one – it is the logical implications of the situation, its intellectual aspects rather than its emotional ones, which are exposed for examination.

It may well be that there will be no return to the levels of productivity which Silverberg maintained even in 1969 and 1970, but it may also be that there remains another new phase in his career, in which he will go on (or, in a sense, return as a more capable writer) to a more objective study of imaginative ideas and the use of sf as a hypothetical discipline. It may be significant that he began this period of semi-retirement by re-writing *Recalled to Life* for a new edition, smoothing the prose without disturbing the content. His future work may be sf which is 'harder' in its method, if not in its content, than the work of the second phase of his career. Whether this proves to be so or not, the body of work which extends thematically and chronologically from *Thorne to Dying Inside* remains one of the most remarkable, as well as one of the most complicated and coherent, artistic achievements in science fiction. ☺

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Painting by A.R. Lowe



A.R. Lowe. 75.

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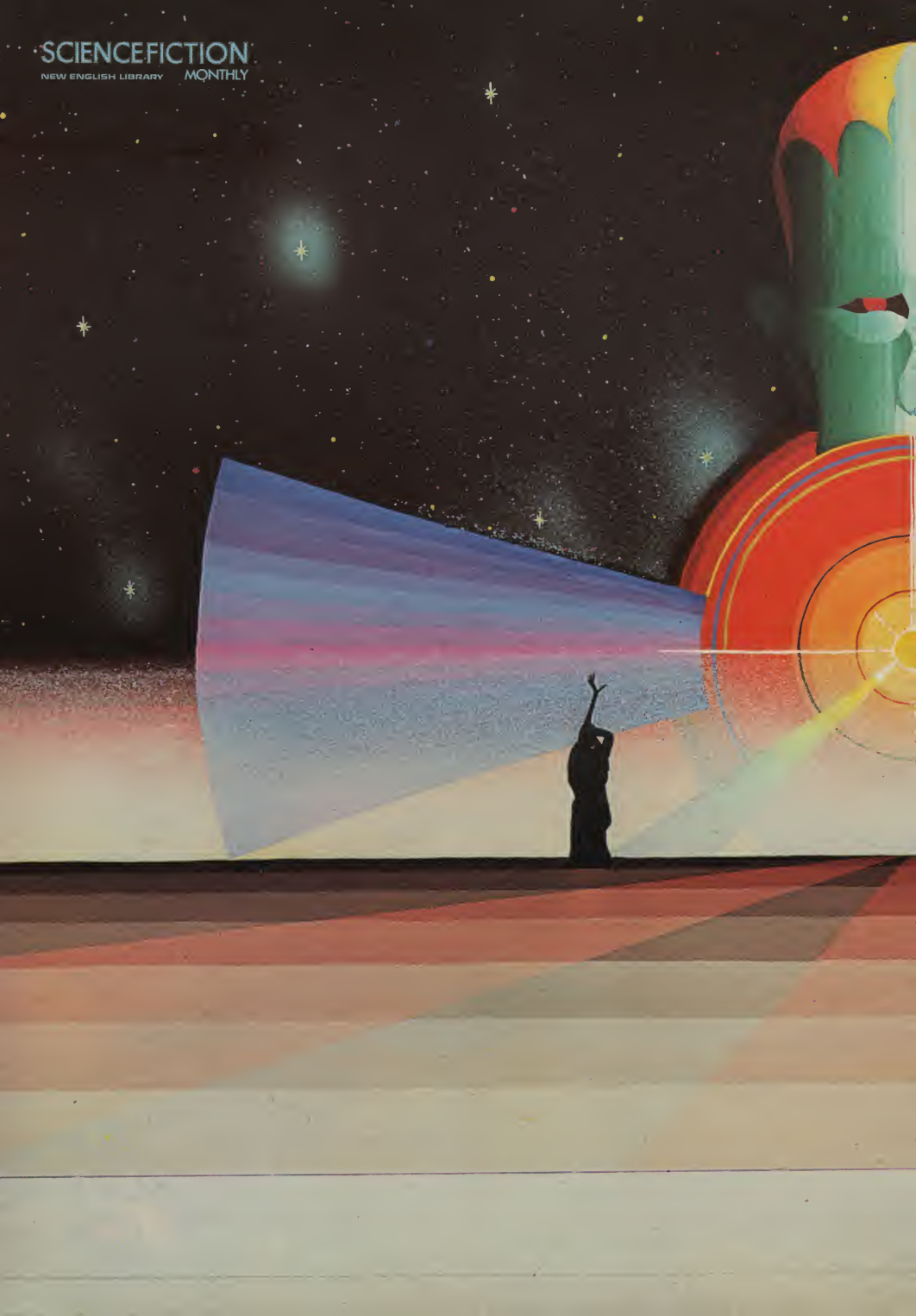




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MONTHLY



REACHING OUT

BY
GARRY KILWORTH

CAPTAIN FLASHBENDER

was blind, yet he could see. One of his senses was an artificial one, adequate, but not by any means perfect. It was precisely because of this imperfection that the benign, balding government employee was chosen for the fourteen-year mission to a planet beyond his own solar system which was believed to have atmospheric conditions similar to his own world. Over-population was not yet a problem on Flashbender's home planet but his superiors believed in planning well in advance to avert such serious occurrences as the end of civilisation. Two missions to the stars had already failed, disastrously. The one-man starships had never returned; at least, not fully returned. The last one, it is true, all but made it. It was just that the pilot was terrified of landing. A touchdown on any planet, even his home, would have made his nightmares real.

"I can't," Captain Yairs had screamed at them. "The spaces . . . the open spaces. I can't come out there where you are. It'll kill me." Then Yairs had deliberately piloted his \$500,000,000 vehicle into the white frothing mouth of the sun, killing himself anyway. They lowered a coffin full of his favourite books into his grave and sang the Hymn of the Star Walkers. Whatever would have killed him on landing was obviously worse than being incinerated inside a metal tube. Those who watched and listened to his last few days of life were certain that Yairs had an extreme case of agoraphobia.

Agoraphobia had not been dismissed completely by the scientists in the discussions that followed the non-return of the first craft and its pilot, Captain L D Polkinghorne. It must be a consideration after all, when a man had to spend seven years in a cabin 2 metres by 3 metres before stepping out onto a world again. However, as Polkinghorne had not returned, any hypothesis they chose could have been the correct one and people do not normally die of agoraphobia.

So the man they chose for the third mission was Calvin Flashbender, honorary Captain for the purpose of the mission and blind from birth. They reasoned that a man who could only see shadows in his mind's eye up to a distance of 3 metres would hardly know the difference between a prairie and a large living-room.

They could not be sure of course, but interstellar travel was a gamble anyway. The ship could be holed or the pilot die of a body malfunction. Over a period of fourteen years anything could happen. But they thought they saw the need to continue trying. Flashbender seemed the right type; happy in his own company, unmarried and philosophical about death. His life had been spent so far in a routine job behind a desk. Here was an opportunity to break the monotony. He was fit, being an exponent of the martial arts (the result of a defiant attitude towards his blindness) but then fitness was not a primary concern of the scientists whose subject was going to spend at least fourteen years in a ship that had an interstellar drive which was only *faster* than a normal interplanetary drive and not amazingly faster. Before the discovery of the drive, scientists and laymen had envisaged an interstellar ship as being supernatural in its speed. Alas, natural boundaries yet prevailed. The drive they discovered could only travel at the speed of light.

Perhaps later would come the dream of spaceship drives; a slide around a bend in time; matter transference?

Flashbender made the necessary corrections to the course and then sat down to finish his game of one-man chess: the invention of Hopperland St James for use on the first mission. Captain Flashbender moved the heavy chess pieces with the sureness of one who has played against the board many times before. In his mind's eye the chess board with its lamplike squares appeared as a block of shadows; well-defined shadows it is true, but shadows nevertheless. He, like other completely blind men who had to rely on the probe rods projecting from their heads, lived in a world of ghostly greys and blacks, where objects had shape and size but no depth: a two-dimensional world. Since he had known no other form of sight, it was to Flashbender quite normal. His judgement of distance within his 3-metre vision was perfect and it would have been difficult to differentiate between him and a sighted person in his present environment. In fact within a 3-metre radius Flashbender was superior, for he had 360° vision.

The probe struck out comically from the top of Flashbender's bald pate like a miniature lighthouse on a dome-shaped rock. Inside the dome, fine wire thinner than a spider's threads carried the transmissions of black and grey photographs to his optic receiver. The probe was Flashbender's white stick. It gained him unwanted and unnecessary sympathy in society, but it was essential to his livelihood. Out in space he was no more an invalid than the next man. On the contrary, his 360° probe put him in the superhuman class and relegated the normal man to a cripple by comparison. He had eyes in the back and at all the other compass points of his head.

The planet which was Captain Flashbender's destination was now only forty-eight hours away. It showed on his external viewer as being a great deal larger than his own world and about 3,000,000 miles further away from its sun. Flashbender had high hopes, however, that it would support human life. He had reason to believe that Yairs had been on its surface and perhaps Polkinghorne also? Maybe he would find Captain Polkinghorne down there, walking around and full of life? It was not likely. Even if he was walking around, which was doubtful, it would be an impossible task to search the planet for him. Besides, he would be an old man of 90 by now.

The board lost again and Flashbender gave a triumphant shout as his 'check mate' was not contradicted. He had the illusion that the board dimmed for an instant, taking its defeat in an unspornsmannlike manner, but he realised that it was probably his probe playing tricks. His probe rod was characteristic of eyes in that it merely relayed images to the brain and let the brain sort them out into real or imaginary objects. Illusions, however, are all *but* real in that they are the expectations of the brain. The boy seen throwing a ball out of the corner of an eye at the same time as a bird flies over his shoulder, brings a momentary start of astonishment as the ball sails over the fields and out of sight. For an instant the boy is on a par with the little tailor in the old tale of the ogre. He is superhuman; a sorcerer. But then the mind puts its foot down hard

and analyses the event, choosing an answer compatible with reality. A boy cannot throw that far, consequently the ball was tossed simultaneously with the arrival of a bird. What was seen was not seen, but thought to be seen. The world is in order again. The mind can rest easy, and the heart cease to flutter. Flashbender's spontaneous shout was so impolitely loud that immediately he expected something to happen, a cringe from his opponent. Thus the board dimmed to his expectations and he almost apologised to it. Not quite, but almost. Then his mind, his rigid, inflexible mind, refused to let him glory in his success and merely left him feeling foolish. If eyes and probes were believed by the brain without question there would still be a little magic left in the world.

Flashbender held his final preparations for landing. To say he was nervous would be an understatement. He was badly frightened. Piloting the starship thus far had not been so very different from working in his office, but soon the practical side to the mission would rear its painful head. Soon he would have to become the nerveless intrepid explorer of the comic books he had read as a child. Apart from his indulgence in the martial arts he had never been a man of action. He was essentially an armchair hero. After a couple of long sips and a search for a landing site he would have to begin to prove that the choice of the scientists was the right one. Calvin Flashbender, a blind clerk, was their choice as saviour of the world. The fact that he invariably hit his thumb with the hammer when knocking in a nail was beside the point.

Captain Flashbender attempted two landings in the module before finally finding a patch of ground stable enough to take its weight. He had already scoured the planet so that the module could photograph most of its aspects from several miles up, then he went down, using the instruments, to the surface of the planet. The next stage of the operation was to gather soil and rock samples, and fauna and flora, if there were any. The first hour of this stage was spent in waiting – waiting for the module's instruments to check the surface gases, the bacteriological content of those gases and the surrounding area of the module for infectious germs. Excitingly enough, it found germs, including aerobic bacteria, but nothing which it would not classify as harmless. The gas also was breathable. When the hour was at an end and the module had ceased mentally counting on its fingers, it politely informed Flashbender that he was permitted to leave its portals – but with extreme caution.

Flashbender was certainly cautious enough as he inched the airlock open and sniffed the outside suspiciously. He had deliberately not looked into the external viewer at the surface of the planet for fear of agoraphobia. Now he was about to be tested fully. The breeze was scented and felt cool on his cheek. For a moment he experienced a flutter of panic as a picture, unassociated with his probe rod, came into his mind: an endless bleak landscape, broken only by scattered moraine and solitary trees. Quickly he concentrated on immediate surroundings and they were interesting enough to hold his attention. He seemed to be on the crest of a small hill covered in coarse grasses. To his left there was a tree, a conifer of sorts, and several varieties of grey flowers poked through the grisaille-style grasses near its roots. Had he been able to see colour Flashbender would have seen at least as many shades as are to be found in the Crecy Window of Gloucester Cathedral, but this splash from an alien paint box left him ignorantly unimpressed. He lived in a world where nature took on the monkish hues of Gothic architecture. Then Flashbender heard sounds, of birds and insects, and he reminded himself that he would need to wear his protective clothing at all times to avoid stings or bites. Involuntarily he pulled his gloves on tighter.

Some of the smells and sounds were so familiar that once, during an unguarded moment, Flashbender felt he was the victim of an expensive hoax. He shook the feeling off and busied himself collecting together sample packets and generally preparing for a day's hard work. He began by pulling up small tufts of the coarse grass by its roots and placing it in bags. While he was doing his part the module would be catching insects in the traps attached to its elephantine legs. Suddenly, as Flashbender knelt down to ease a peppery weed with tenacious roots from its bed, a grizzly shape about the size of a lion slid across the outer perimeter of his mind-vision. He dropped his trowel with a startled cry and was attentive to the pictures in his brain. There was nothing there, or whatever was there had moved out of the range of his probe rod. His heart was running over his ribs like knuckles on a washboard. Had he imagined it? Was it another of those damned illusions, called forth by a lonely mind? Flashbender began to reassure himself. Then it was there again, a huge predaacious beast with

open jaws and sharp teeth dripping saliva. It paused for an instant as Flashbender let out a snort of fright, then it came forward swiftly with gleaming eyes.

Flashbender screamed, started to run and tripped head-over-heels on his own instruments. There was a loud crack as his head hit the ground and shattered the probe rod. Pain followed, but not enough to make him lose consciousness. A few seconds and then Calvin Flashbender felt the hot breath of an alien beast at his throat. A minute later he tried to struggle upright but this time the pain was too fierce and he passed out.

When he came round he tried immediately to focus on his surroundings but nothing came into Flashbender's mind except vague pictures which he knew were of his own making and not transmissions relayed from the probe rod. That was broken, he knew. He was completely blind and the pain was still very bad. He had to get back to the module. He stood upright, swaying a little with giddiness. Which way was the module? 'O, God,' he groaned aloud, 'if I move the wrong way now I am finished.'

Think! He must think. Almost a dead art with Flashbender. He tried to remember which way the sun was in relation to the module. Think! Yes – it had been directly in the doorway because the shadow had been behind the module. He turned slowly in a circle trying to feel which direction was warmest on his face. That way? Yes, definitely that way. But how long had he been lying unconscious? Had the sun moved any great distance? He would have to chance that. Wait a second. The breeze was on his left cheek when he stepped from the module. It was on his left cheek now, as he faced the sun. He began to feel optimistic. Now don't be too eager, he told himself. What about the land? How did it slope? Away from the ship, definitely. He stepped forward, tentatively feeling with his foot. The ground did slope downwards. Jubilantly he spun 180°, making his head sing in pain, and began walking uphill with the sun on the nape of his neck and a breeze on his right cheek. He stretched his arms out wide to give himself maximum frontage, and walked until he struck his shin on the solid foreleg of the module. Success exhilarated him beyond anything that he had previously experienced. He felt his way to the door of the module and on inside. Painkilling tablets were in the medicine chest to the left of the door but he had to be sure that he was taking the right kind. He remembered that the ones he wanted had grooves cut across them in the shape of a cross. Finding them he swallowed two and then lay on his bunk to assess his position: a position, which, on the face of it, seemed precarious.

Firstly, would he be able to manage the starship's control panel? Fortunately, the most important instruments had audio as well as visual indicators: these had been installed as an emergency measure, but he had found it safer to use both audio and visual on the journey out. He was not so familiar with the module panel, but it was basically a scaled-down version of the one in the starship. Once he had got the thing into orbit, provided he did not hit the starship on exit (a chance so remote he could discount it), he could allow the module to home-in automatically. Of course, if anything went wrong with the auto he was in one hell of a spot, but then what was he in anyway? The starship's computer would help him keep his homeward course: it had the memory of the outward journey locked in its tin brain. All Flashbender had to do was get it to reverse the journey.

By the time he was tired enough to sleep he had worked out the details. Seven years in a room the size of a prisoner's cell may be very boring but they make for habitual actions that a man could not forget even if he tried. Flashbender knew every tiny centimetre of his living and working quarters. All that remained was to amuse himself during the long voyage home.

At first he had not considered completing the mission. The films would be the scientists' main interest; those of the planet's surface and the ones the module had taken when he went down. After all, any samples and specimens he took back would be extremely localised. He had not the power to hope for about all over the planet, and not the space for the samples either. Survival, both for his own sake and the mission's, was the most important factor. When he woke from his sleep, however, he had the urge to go outside again. He felt his way to a cabinet in which he knew there was a reel of wire, found it and fastened one end to his belt. The reel he fitted in a notch on the side of his bunk so that it would unravel as he walked. Then he felt his way outside.

The external world had gone, but he was no longer afraid of it anyway. An hour was spent feeling his way down to where he had left his specimen box. He picked it up and made his way in the direction in which he had seen the tree on arrival. It took a long time but he found it and began taking leaves and scrambling underneath for





pieces of root. Then he had an idea and felt for a branch, broke it off and stripped it of leaves and projections. He began tapping his way around with it.

This beats crawling,' he said aloud, pleased with himself for his ingenuity. 'I wonder no one thought of it before.' Flashbender continued his collecting of mosses and fungi and anything else he could lay his fumbling fingers upon, determined not to be beaten by his blindness, yet knowing all the time that his work was to be in vain – a futile mission bound to end in ultimate failure. One thing was certain, he would make sure it was no fault of his that the last hundred years of struggling to reach this goal had been for nothing. Two lives lost and a third on the brink and all for a few muddy pieces of unusable planet.

Flashbender launched the module without trouble and once in orbit found the starship by audio search, then he aimed the module in the direction in which the tone was the loudest and switched to automatic 'find and lock-on'. In the big ship he had the resources of the starship's complex computer at his disposal and he could set course for home. The blind captain was extremely proud of himself for coping with his primitive infirmity with such ease and competence. He was like the castaway bank clerk who finds new depths in himself when faced with survival in an alien environment. It was the making of a man.

On the return journey Flashbender taught himself to play chess in his new state of complete blindness. It meant that he either had to ask the computer where the pieces were during a game or he had to remember every move from the beginning. The former was tedious and the latter almost impossible, but he found himself improving. Also he would sit for hours allowing his thoughts to follow a logical trail of connections in the way that a thesaurus does. He was following such a trend once while playing chess and led his mind into the basic motives behind the game in which he was involved. Suddenly he stiffened as a thought came to him which really should have come before. After a while he said to the computer,

'Did the starship take any photographs of the planet's surface? The computer ticked over for a few seconds then answered 'No' in its flat monotone.

'Then I want you to destroy all those films taken by the module,' said Flashbender firmly.

There was a pause again, then, 'Not permitted to destroy.'

The Captain was not to be dissuaded from his wishes. He asked the computer, 'What would happen if the module became radioactively contaminated during exit?'

'Then should have to jettison the module,' came the answer.

'But only the cameras and films became contaminated,' persisted Flashbender.

'Just the cameras and films?' repeated the credulous computer in its monotone.

'Yes.'

'Shall have to find a way to jettison the cameras,' advised the obedient servant.

Half an hour later it said to the human, 'They are all gone.'

'All of them?' said Flashbender in surprise. 'Every single one?'

'Yes.'

'You wouldn't lie to me, would you?' asked Flashbender with a trace of mockery in his voice.

'Am not permitted to lie,' said the computer. 'Have melted the bases of the cameras with artificially-generated heat and ejected them into space.'

'Good,' said Flashbender, satisfied. Then brightly, 'Say "I" will you?'

The computer remained silent. It was a game Flashbender played – another game to pass the time. The computer's manufacturers had balked at giving it a personal pronoun. That was getting too close to the essence of mankind's superiority over its creations. Flashbender wanted to pick clean those bones but the computer refused to co-operate.

'Ah to hell with you,' grunted Flashbender. Then, 'On second thoughts, stay where you are. I may need you.'

He refused to speak to ground control except to request that they fetch him down from orbit without relying on him. They did so and landed him safely. The splendid reception, that was meant to be the biggest noise since the last 763 bomb had split an island clean in half, died to a hush as they saw a bald, bearded man with a smile on his face come tapping down the alloy ladder of the module using a gnarled but gleamingly polished cane. They were embarrassed when he stepped from the last stair, paused and then knelt down to press his face into the ground. Then he raised his head and gave a laugh that shattered their silence. He was surely mad.

When they questioned him later they found

Flashbender perfectly sane and apart from radiating an extraordinary aura of confidence, little different from the person who had left them fourteen years previously.

Doctor P L Shaw opened the debriefing informally. 'Well Captain, you made it.'

'Yes,' beamed Flashbender with that vacant smile which disconcerted his superiors. 'I made it. I also managed to obtain samples of soil, vegetation and animal life which may prove interesting. I gathered those after I had disabled myself.' He pointed to his fractured probe. Shaw spoke slowly. 'Well done,' he said, 'but how did your accident occur?'

Captain Flashbender told him. 'I was frightened by a large carnivore and foolishly panicked.'

'Ah,' replied the zoologist. 'So there are large animals out there. That's interesting.'

Flashbender laced his hands around his stick and cleared his throat. He had an important question to put to the five scientists. 'Doctor Shaw,' he said, 'What is the possibility of there being intelligent life? What are the odds?'

The Doctor raised his eyebrows. 'About a thousand to one, give or take a thousand,' he replied frivolously. 'Why?'

Flashbender ignored the counter question. He ran his fingers down his polished cane, as though delighting in the feel of the knots on the wood. The team of scientists exchanged exasperated looks, confident in the knowledge that their hero could not observe their impatience.

'And what,' continued Flashbender after a while, 'are the odds of those creatures being human?'

Shaw burst out laughing involuntarily. 'Absolutely ridiculous,' he expostulated.

'Then,' replied the unperturbed blind captain, 'ridiculous it is, because there are humans up there, exactly like us, in both looks and feelings.'

Five out of five bodies present jerked upright instantly.

'You met them?' he was asked.

'No, I neither saw nor heard nor felt them,' answered Flashbender, 'but evidence of their presence was unmistakable. You see I have learned in my blindness, to think – really think – and my touch is surer than a normal man's sight. Eyes can lie, I know that. There are illusions that play games with eyes and minds, but the touch, the feel, is sure. We shall have to look elsewhere.'

One of the scientists muttered. 'Well the films will soon prove you right or wrong.'

'No they won't,' replied Flashbender. 'I got the computer to ditch the films in deep space. Every last one of them.'

Shaw shouted at him then. 'What! All our work ruined?' he shouted. 'You imbecile, I've waited half a lifetime for you to return, why do that?'

The blind man replied. 'I don't wish to be responsible for an invasion.' One of the men, an old psychologist, spoke up in quivering accents. 'We have no need to do that?'

Flashbender turned on him coldly. 'What happens when we are shouldering each other for a square metre of ground? I'll tell you what happens, we become desperate, and when we become desperate we justify previously unjustifiable acts. If future generations invade that planet they'll have to do it blind; without films to guide them to cities; without the knowledge of the technological state of their enemies and most of all ignorant of the weaponry they will have to face. Blind, you understand? They'll never do it like that. We're not that brave.'

Shaw said quietly. 'We can always send someone else.'

Flashbender tapped his cane on the floor like a drumstick. 'Yes, but can you afford it? First a reconnaissance and then an invasion fleet, full of expensive men and machines? All that way, and perhaps to lose? Wouldn't it be better to search elsewhere? They nodded and Flashbender was relieved to hear their grunts of assent.

Shaw smacked his right fist into his left hand. 'Damn it,' he spluttered. 'How can you be so sure? If you neither heard nor saw nor felt humans – how do you know?'

Flashbender grinned and turned his glassy eyes in the direction of the speaker. 'That beast I mentioned,' he answered, 'it came directly for me. There was no hesitation.'

'So?' Shaw queried.

Flashbender touched his own face and said, 'It licked my cheek. The touch implies a tamed carnivore who finds me so similar to its masters that it does not hesitate to approach; a beast with masters who believe in taming animals with kindness; an animal the equivalent of a dog, that greets one of its benefactors with a fond wipe of the tongue over a familiar face.'

BACK IN SFM VOL 1 NO 11 ROGER DEAN WAS INTERVIEWED FOR THE ARTIST IN SCIENCE FICTION FEATURE AND HE TALKED ABOUT HIS ALBUM COVER DESIGNS AND ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS, HE WAS ALSO VERY EAGER TO EXPOUND ON HIS PLANS FOR A BOOK OF HIS WORK. THE BOOK WAS FINALLY PUBLISHED JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND PROBABLY APPEARED IN MANY A CHRISTMAS STOCKING; IT'S OBVIOUSLY THE SORT OF BOOK WHICH IS EARMARKED FOR PRESENT-GIVING. VERY FEW PEOPLE

COULD FAIL TO FIND ROGER DEAN'S WORK APPEALING.

Roger Dean



Topographic
Oceans
by Roger Dean



Badger by Roger Dean from VIEWS

ROGER DEAN grows pictures as some people grow plants; you could say he has green fingers. A painting may take him a week of painstaking attention to detail and involved technique or simply ten minutes with a spray gun. He often does hundreds of sketches and working drawings in preparation for a picture. His huge collection of reference books supplies him with valuable information about insects, birds, plants, mechanics, fairy tales; in fact every subject imaginable. A large selection of sf literature is close at hand, as well as a vast quantity of colour slides featuring waterfalls, rocks, trees, clouds and the sea. He will work systematically and carefully through the night, often watching a tv programme at the same time or listening to

some music, unhurried by the passing of time and undisturbed by frequent intrusions by his numerous cats.



VIEWS

Produced and Designed by Roger Dean

A Dragon's Dream Book

Distributed by Big 'O' Posters Ltd

Reviewed by Jenny Jacobs



Green Castle by Roger Dean from VIEWS

When he was at college he received no formal training in drawing and painting (in fact, he studied furniture design), yet over the years he has developed a unique style of illustration with a refreshingly catholic attitude to techniques. He does not think of himself as an artist or even a designer, but more as an architect-inventor, or perhaps discoverer would be more appropriate. His pictures are vivid and shocking, combining hitherto conflicting images such as birds with elephants, or insects with machines, to create a striking realism. Indeed, when he is praised for the evocative fantasy landscapes he produces, he eagerly explains their everyday reality. The strange organic dwellings that appear in many of his pictures are serious architectural projects that he has worked on for years, while he studied the psychological impact of environments and solved the technical problems. The mechanical creatures are not just inhabitants of his alien worlds, they are Roger Dean's exercises in combining the compatible elements of mechanics with living organisms. All his knowledge and ideas come together in his three-dimensional designs: for example his architecture and his project for a huge mechanical butterfly-like stage mounted on trucks. He expects the stage to be used for pop festivals in the near future.

As a compulsive explorer of the unknown he is highly successful at producing futuristic science fiction landscapes and views. However, there is more than a suggestion of the past to be seen in his work. The atmosphere of a medieval fairy tale is created by his bridled dragon climbing to a towering cloud-wrapped castle and scenes such as the helmeted knight on a charging horse in the underwater Paladin picture. Roger Dean mixes prehistory with science fiction and science with the supernatural as liberally as he combines insects, machines, space and waterfalls. He is concerned with the essential nature of the thing he is dealing with and reducing it to its simplest form – a flying elephant needs wings and a mechanised space bug needs pivot joints and luminous horned casing. He is not concerned with decoration (that is taken care of automatically) or embellishment, as that would merely defeat his aims; he is interested in simplicity and integration.

One of Roger Dean's most popular paintings depicts flying elephants and was commissioned for an Osibisa album cover. The group liked the idea of elephants charging through a hot African atmosphere, it suited their image. So he painted winged elephants swooping down over a brilliantly coloured swamp inhabited by huge lizards. The elephants soon left the swamp and were seen many times on posters, badges, T-shirts, advertisements, billboards and even on a hot-air balloon. Animals are a large feature of his work and even when they are depicted in their natural surroundings with no anatomical alterations they evince a strange uncanny other-worldliness. A good example of this is the beautifully-drawn badger picture. The snakes on the *Relayer* cover also create strange sensations by their massive size and realism, and they serve as an example of Roger Dean's ability to create an appropriate sense of scale. He is able to draw an ocean without marring its emptiness and a wizard without limiting his power. In one of his most interesting paintings he depicts himself as a wizard carrying a wand, wearing a butterfly-winged wolf cape and big hairy boots. He is walking across a rocky waterfall which is hanging in space. The original painting is quite large and the wizard is comparatively small. He is surrounded by infinite stars and planets; the sense of scale that this creates is most effective. There are certain pieces of his work which are quite under-rated, such as the McKendree Spring album covers; beautiful in their simplicity and sense of space. The blue demon, one of his most popular paintings, has a great feeling of energy and movement and therefore no distracting details that could possibly limit its scale.

All of his pictures have their own individuality but as so many of the well-known ones are frequently discussed and analysed it is worth mentioning a few of his more obscure pieces. The Badgie cover that was based on a photograph of a bird's skull and a model plane is one of his most shocking images; without fail this painting promotes a response of horror. Nitro Function was another quite ominous painting. It did not take him long to complete but, by emphasising the shape of the surging horse and the rapidity with which the flying creature appeared from the distance, he created an atmosphere of speed and power. Undoubtedly, the most under-rated Roger Dean picture is the one used for a SNAFU cover. It shows a sunset scene with a man and an ox pulling a record stylus around a circular field. Both record cover and poster reproductions of the original paintings were of bad quality and failed to show the original depth of colour and fine detail.

It is possible to get a better look at his work in the book he has recently produced called *Views*. It contains as much of Roger's work as can be got into 168 pages of 12 inches by 12 inches format and is excellently reproduced to capture the quality of the original artwork in full colour throughout. There is also an informative text with many drawings, small pictures and double-page spreads. Since the publication of *Views* Roger Dean has been completing a book on architecture which will be his next publication. He has also been involved in preliminary work on an elaborate science fiction film with his brother Martyn Dean which promises to be a breakthrough in filming techniques.





Skeleton by Roger Dean from VIEWS



Dragon, Tree and Village by Roger Dean from VIEWS



FANTASY'S CHAMPION

Can you tell me something about Lin Carter and which of his books I can obtain?

M J Firman, Cambridge

Is it possible to obtain the 'Callisto' tales of Lin Carter, as published by Dell paperbackbacks in the US?

Ian C Smith, South Wigston, Leicestershire

Lin Carter took to authorship after writing about the works of H P Lovecraft and other writers he studied in *Weird Tales*. His first novel, *The Wizard of Lemuria* (Ace 1965), grew into a series of 'sword and sorcery' adventures concerning *Thongor* of Lemuria which have been published here by Tandem; the other four titles are *Thongor Against the Gods*, *Thongor in the City of Magicians*, *Thongor at the end of Time* and *Thongor Fights the Pirates of Tarakus*.

In 1967 he edited and completed a book of Robert E Howard's early tales about the Atlantean savage *King Kull* (Lancer). He then teamed up with L Sprague de Camp in extending the series of *Conan* stories based on Howard's best-known character; these have been published here by Sphere (see *Query Box*, *SFM* Vol 2 No 4).

Among other Carter science-fantasies are *The Man Without a Planet* and *The Star Magicians* (both Ace 1966); *The Flame of Iridar* (Belmont 1967); *The Thief of Thoth* and *Power at the Edge of Time* (Belmont 1968); *Star Rogue* and *Outworlder* (Lancer 1970, 1971). These are obtainable here only through specialist dealers. But Orbit paperbackbacks are reprinting his *Jandar of Callisto* series, which Dell introduced in 1972; other titles now available are *Black Legion of Callisto* and *Sky Pirates of Callisto*. In train come the *Mad Empress*, the *Mind Wizards* and the *Lankar* of *Callisto*, all quite intentionally – reminiscent of John Carter of Barsoom.

A more recent series, also ERB-inspired (though some critics say it has none of Burroughs' magic), is based on the world *Under the Green Star*. This comes from DAW

The Query Box

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS SHERIDAN

Readers' questions on any aspect of science fiction are dealt with in this regular feature by Thomas Sheridan, who is internationally known as one of the foremost experts on the medium. Address your questions to THE QUERY BOX, 'Science Fiction Monthly', New English Library Ltd, Barnard's Inn, Holborn, London EC1N 2JR. They will be answered as soon as possible.

Books; other titles are *When the Green Star Calls* and *As the Green Star Rises*. Carter edited several anthologies including *Flashing Swords*, a selection of swashbuckling tales published in two volumes and issued here by Mayflower (1975). Earnest students are most grateful to Carter for reviving interest in the classic writers of heroic fantasy, as the instigator of Ballantine's *Lord Dunsany* series, and author of *Imaginary Worlds* (Ballantine 1973), a lively history of the genre.

A leading light of The Swordsmen and Sorcerers' Guild of America (SAGA), he is also known for his revealing studies of the work of Tolkien and Lovecraft. *A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* (1972) is available here as a Panther paperback.

WHY WEINBAUM?

Why hasn't E E 'Doc' Smith been included in Walter Gillings' *SFM* series 'Modern Masters of Science Fiction'? Why did he include Stanley G Weinbaum, who took 75th place in the list of favourite authors?

Sean G Toal, Blackley, Manchester

'Doc' Smith was the subject of the fourth article in the series (Vol 1 No 10). If you can't lay hands on this issue, you will find an extended account of his work in the introduction to *The Best of E E 'Doc' Smith*, a new collection of his tales which is now available in hardcover from Weidenfeld and Nicolson and in paperback from Orbit.

Concerning Weinbaum, Gillings writes: 'The subjects of this series were chosen on the basis of their overall contribution to the science fiction field, without regard for their present popularity, which must be influenced to some extent by the present availability of their work. This is evident from the results of the "inadvertent" poll of *SFM* readers (published in Vol 2 No 6) which would show some peculiar anomalies if judged by the criteria I have adopted. As it happened, seven of the thirteen subjects covered in the series up to now were voted into the first five places. The list included, besides Weinbaum, such otherwise acceptable "Masters" as Jack Williamson, Henry Kuttner, Edmond Hamilton, Murray Leinster and even the vastly influential editor John W Campbell. Not to mention poor old Verne (score 66), who must be turning in his grave. . .'

RESTLESS DUMAREST

Are there any books in the 'Earl Dumarest' series by E C Tubb which have been published in the UK, other than *The Winds of Gath*, *Deral*, *Kalin* and *Toymen*?

Kevin Walsh, Chester-le-Street, Co Durham

The titles you mention, which appeared in 1973, are all that have been issued here to date, but I gather that Arrow have hopes of extending the series this year as well as reprinting the first four novels. The series was introduced

in 1967 by Ace, New York, who continued it with *Jester at Scar*, *Lallia*, *Technos*, and *Veruchia*. Since 1973 five more titles have been published by DAW Books: *Mayenne*, *Jondelle*, *Zenya*, *Eloise*, and *Eye of the Zodiac*. If the author's expectations are fulfilled, another will have appeared by now – but, he tells me, 'I can't tell you the title, as Don Wolheim has changed it'.

Evidently Tubb's wandering spaceman has an equally keen following in Germany, where the series has found a warm reception in its entirety. Wake up, England!

BUSY BEES

Many years ago I read a story about hybrid bees, bred for honey, who spread through South America causing deaths and the restructuring of society. In view of actual reports of 'killer bees' in South America, I would like to locate the story.

Alex Censor, St Thomas, Virgin Islands, USA

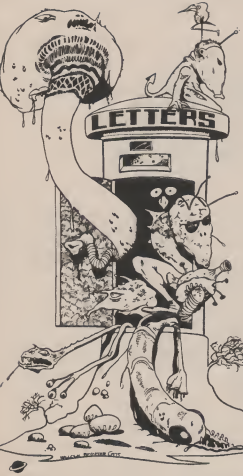
The Bees from Borneo by Will H Gray first appeared in *Amazing Stories* February 1931. It was reprinted in the original edition of Groff Conklin's *Omnibus of Science Fiction* (Crown, New York, 1952) as well as several subsequent anthologies which followed (Doubleday 1963). However, it was omitted from the Berkley paperback (1966).

THE REAL MCCOMAS

Is it possible to obtain a copy of *Adventures in Time and Space*, and if so, at what price?

Glynne Lenney, Derby

The classic anthology edited by Raymond J Healy and J Francis McComas, published by Random House, New York, in 1946, has been a rare item for many years. It has been reissued in a revised edition in the Modern Library series, and given the new title *Famous Science Fiction Stories*. The book may also be bought through Mike Sandow, 1 Mallard Road, Chesham, Essex, at about £5.00 plus postage. But you may have to wait your turn.



bad the book is. Of course, allowances must be made for personal taste, but one would have thought some sort of consistency would have emerged. However, what is not the case, what one critic calls a masterpiece, another calls atrocious, and yet another dares to call it an atrocious masterpiece. If one were to take any notice of these critics one would undoubtedly miss all the truly great novels and merely read the mediocre. Fortunately, I do not read criticism so my mind remains open until I have read the novel. I might suggest you dispense with such idiots in your publication.

Ian Buttersworth (Cheadle, Cheshire)

Ed: As I'm sure you're well aware there are more paperback and hardcover SF books published each month than we have room to review in *SFM*. The new feature, *Paperbacks On Trial*, seemed to offer a solution to this problem and also enabled us to publish the critical viewpoints of several well-known SF personalities without actually putting them to the trouble of writing lengthy reviews. Obviously, criticism is a matter of personal opinion, but I do feel that the chart has some significance. The books appeared on the chart in order of popularity, so if you're looking for guidance try reading the first four titles listed and accept the taste of the majority.

I would like to congratulate you on the high standard of *SFM* Vol 3 No 1 which is perhaps the best issue to date (especially in terms of artwork), but I would like to disagree over some of the things said in the article on *Space 1999*, last year's embarrassing SF programme.

Many of the characterisations and stories worse in *UFO* than *Space 1999*. I think

UFO was far more original and realistic and the acting was of a far higher standard than in *Space 1999*, which doesn't really have any actors worthy. Barbara Bain appears to be extremely false, if I hear her say 'John. . . ' in that horrible drawl again I'm sure I'll explode. Surely nobody believes that there will or could be a space base like that by 1989? surely nobody believes that a huge spacecraft will hover over the base every week and screech 'John Koenig? surely nobody believes that as many as twenty *Enterprise* will be blown out of the earth every week?

Space 1999's special effects chap Mr Johnson (whom you quote as seems a bit self-righteous) I much prefer *Star Trek's Enterprise* to his models made from Airfix kits. *Star Trek's* effects were very good for their time, and anyway they do make a programme. At least *Star Trek* had warm characters and original stories: a vast majority of *Space 1999*'s stories can be traced back. In some respects, the crew of the *Enterprise* and the *Alpha* were made, by some alien means, to mutiny and go to a planet where they experienced absolute paradise, only the command officers were unaffected. Both of these men found some way of joining their two principal actors (Spock and Russell) back to their senses and together they managed to regain their crews.

Thank heavens a *Star Trek* movie is on the way, as the only other SF on tv at the moment is *The Star Million Dollars Movie* and *Doctor Who* (which is only good for a laugh).

John X Hind (Radcliffe-on-Trent, Notts)

Being a regular follower of established science fiction novels and films, I think I am qualified to offer a few comments in defence of the tv series *Space 1999* following your article by John Brosnan in *SFM* Vol 3 No 1.

Your correspondent levelled many criticisms at the series as a whole, most prominently the alleged poor scripts, lack of human character and the rather insufficient attention to detail. I think that what one must realise when viewing the programme is that it is basically a 'serialised epic'. The enormous and quite horrific situation which the writers and producers have created is something which I am sure many of our most revered authors would hesitate to attempt. We must bear in mind that they are using a very small cast and a very small number of characters, and in so doing have set a precedent which will make a very difficult task for producers of future serials and series of SF.

As we are dealing with science fiction rather than fact, surely the situations featured in the first three episodes that your correspondent seemed to criticise are hardly new, and many of the plots featured in thousands of sf books, films and series of the past. (Perhaps someone could explain to me sometime the difference between a serial and a series.) No one could prove beyond doubt that events such as these could not occur in the depths of outer space, so healthy science fiction will exist in many different forms while this doubt exists.

I hope Mr Brosnan saw the recent episode entitled 'Space Brain'. I personally found it superbly well done, especially in the way it produced, and if the main characters do lack any human emotion and warmth, I think this only emphasises the hopelessness of the situation into which they have been plunged.

In my opinion the producers should be congratulated for making such a positive contrast between *Space 1999* and the fiction of C Morris (Hornchurch, Essex).

Does anyone out there in my age group (21) fancy starting a correspondence? My special genre is fantasy and my favourite authors are Isaac Asimov, Arthur Clarke and Michael Moorcock.

Norman Eden (87 Mayfield Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey)

PTo work! To work!' His face suddenly became serious, fierce even. Staring at the silent, trembling Insoi delegation he drew his formidable gloves from his belt and laid them, claws uppermost, on the table. 'Now then,' he said in a purr. 'Who's your chief spokesman, gentlemen?'



TONY MASERO

Things happened so fast Quarterman was bound to get a shock. Ensor, his deputy, hurried through the base complex to the commander's office. He tried to keep far enough ahead of the Insoi delegation to be able to give the chief fair warning, but he was always losing the contest.

'You won't like it, Dan,' he said. 'It's crazy.'

'Won't like what? What's crazy?' Dan Quarterman looked up irritably. His table was littered with task-force reports and the geological analysis of Sector Ten which had been produced by the base's computer.

Quarterman was dark complexioned, dark haired, hook-nosed. His face showed the cumulative strain of four tours of duty in command of a Forward Exploitation Unit.

'The Insoi delegation's about one jump behind me,' said Ensor.

'What's so surprising about that? We said we'd see them this morning didn't we?' Quarterman returned to the print-outs as if even the few seconds before the delegation appeared must be put to work. He ran a finger along the figures for deep-strata drilling analysis.

So far as he was concerned the delegation would

cause only a minor interruption. It was their third or maybe fourth appearance since the signing of the draft treaty permitting exploitation of the mineral rights on M19 by the Federal Fleet's Commercial Wing. Complaints dropped into a regular pattern. You could guess how they'd fall out.

'They've brought an adviser with them,' said Ensor anxiously, looking over his shoulder.

'OK Roif - OK! They can do that! The treaty's standard.' He quoted: '*Indigenous negotiators can elect to be advised by any party they choose provided said party conducts negotiations in accordance with recognised code and in English or other official federal language.* So what?'

'It's crazy,' said Ensor. 'The adviser...' But he didn't have a chance to brief the commander further. A gong chimed. The voice of Quarterman's robot secretary announced, 'Chief Pralze. Insoi delegation.' The curved wall of Quarterman's office made a door. It opened and there they were.

Quarterman looked at them and smiled politely; the smile they said you have to smile at aliens to whom you owe treaty obligations and who think they have grievances. But it was a weary smile. The aliens of Sector Ten received it in their blank, hostile way. There

was the paramount chief, Praise, and one or two lesser chieftains. They were oily-skinned with bony, auricular channels at the front of the skull that looked like miniature torpedo tubes.

Quarterman wondered why one of them had brought a domestic animal with him. Maybe he was a good-luck token. Funny; none of the other delegations had produced one. Quarterman looked with distaste at the creature. He had about the same shape and looks as a cat back on Earth. He sat by the legs of one of the chiefs and licked his chops with a bright pink tongue. He regarded the base commander greenishly from steady eyes.

'Welcome,' said Quarterman. 'Feel at home.'
'We bring an adviser,' said Praise. 'We lodge a complaint.'

'Ask your adviser to join you. Time's short, Chief. And size.'

Ensor coughed discreetly. The Insochi chief looked puzzled. He stretched out his left hand in a sweeping, downward gesture. It was then Quarterman got his shock. He suddenly found himself looking at the cat. Very closely at the cat, which had poured himself gracefully upward onto Quarterman's table. He couldn't help bounding backward in his chair. In a second the years of training asserted themselves. He

to the last full stop and comma,' said Ensor. 'We're going to have real trouble with him.'

'You bet we're going to have trouble. And you know why?' Quarterman glanced at his deputy. Ensor waited.

'I'll tell you why, Rolf. The computer analysis shows that Insochi Sector Ten is rich in pronucleon seams at zero penetration. Chances are the deposits expand into Sectors Nine and Eleven. That smart pussycat knows that. While there's a dispute the FE Unit's forced to suspend drilling and mining. While it's suspended the Insochi are working their oily hands to the bone ripping the ore out of the ground with stone axes, feeding trowels, hair-grips or whatever's handy...'

'Sub-section thirty, paragraph two,' said Ensor. 'Indigenous population with settlement rights shall receive full compensation in respect of exploitable substances as defined in appendix one, which are or may be recovered by the sole and exclusive industry of said indigenous population prior to the signing of the treaty or in the event a dispute exists until the signing of a consolation waiver...'

'Oh, shut up!' snarled the base commander. 'I know it. Too well.'

'So we're stopped?'
'Until we can get Praise's hoofprint on a consolation

but there was no alternative. Commanders of Forward Exploitation Units were supposed to be above such things.

Sector Ten was about an hour's jetting time from the base. It lay along the foot of some hills beyond an inland sea and across the sprawling estuary of a river. A third of the FE Unit's effort of robot and heavy equipment was concentrated there. There were rich ore-bearing deposits with big energy potential buried in the hills. The machines were spread over a wide area; not one was working. The blue-green light of M 19 winked back from their shiny surfaces at the inspecting jets.

As they flew over the district command post the local team came out in their environment helmets. One of them spread out his hands in a gesture of hopelessness and pointed at the nearest hill. Several hundred tribesmen, males and females, were working away at an open seam. Two robots, a digger and a grader loomed over them, but like all other machines in the sector they were stopped. An ant-like stream of pack animals stretched down the hillside making two-way traffic between the works and the Insochi settlement.

Ensor had arranged for a child's car safety-seat to be put in the skimmer for his passenger. Sinn sat in it,



got back into a more dignified position. He smiled that smile of welcome again.

'Sinn,' said the cat. He extended a foreleg. At the end of it was a small, cold hand rather like the delicate, buttoned hand of an Earth higher-monkey. Quarterman took it, still smiling.

'Quarterman,' he said automatically. Now he noticed the thin metal collar almost hidden in the black fur. The collar had a curved box attached to it. It fitted against the cat's neck below his right jawbone. The voice that spoke came from the box.

'System of Minoia. Planet P 30 on the Federation's maps. Commander. Profession - arguement.'

'Mr Sinn is an attorney-at-law,' said Ensor. Quarterman shot his deputy a single look. It was the kind of look maybe Julius Caesar gave Brutus as the knives went in.

The cat was saying. The Insochi of Sector Ten have engaged me to represent them. They have a complaint of treaty violation. I have filed a consolation demand on their behalf. I trust we can reach a reasonable solution, Commander. I find that all these matters have a compensating factor.'

'Why don't we all sit down,' said Quarterman, who badly needed time. 'I'll get some coffee. Rolf, get some coffee. Do you drink coffee, Mr Sinn?' He looked at the attorney uncertainly.

'Thank you. I will take milk only,' said the cat. 'You can call me Sinn, Commander. My species does not take much account of prefix titles.'

'Milk for the ca... attorney.' Quarterman snapped at retreating Ensor.

He tidied his hair. He was careful not to inconvenience Sinn whose handsome tail curled over one sheet of the geological analysis. He hoped Rolf made it back fast with the coffee. Quarterman felt lonely. He'd met some aliens in his time but never one, more disturbing than this one who looked like an old Earth cat but talked like a district attorney.

Sinn studied him. He made a brief remark to the Insochi chief in local dialect and stroked his whiskers thoughtfully. Quarterman didn't understand what had been said. The Insochi were sitting in a half circle at a respectful distance from the other side of his table. He looked along their faces, but they were as rocklike and expressionless as usual. They betrayed nothing.

'You dumbhead! You could've found some way to warn me, couldn't you? Hell, I could've beamed the Institute of Alien Fauna to ship me a giant mouse to make things even!' The preliminary meeting was over. The Insochi and their weird attorney were quartered in the guest rooms at the base. In the safety of the team's quarters, Quarterman blew the safety valve on his frustrations.

The sonofabitch knows the standard treaty down

waiver. If we can't get a settlement fast all the equipment will have to be moved out of the sector into others.'

'Until the other tribes get to hear that alley-cat's arguments about waste disposal injuring the environment,' said Ensor. 'When they do we're going to be ass-deep in consolation demands. And stalled all over.'

'I need someone from home,' said Quarterman. 'I need a lawyer as smart in frontier codes as Mr Sinn.'

'It'll take three months to ship him.'

The commander chewed a knuckle. 'Goddam! He exploded. They've got us over a barrel, Rolf! If we agree to investigate waste disposal and pollution and have to put in systems it'll double the cost of the pronucleon. The Energy Purchasing Commission's gonna love that. We'll lose the franchise. If we wait to get an adviser from home the Insochi will rob us ragged, then sell the stuff back to us and there'll still be no guarantee we'll defeat Sinn.'

'Make a deal. We could take care of the Insochi.' Quarterman scratched his mop of black hair. 'How about a tour of the diggings, and an accident - fatal, of course?'

'No dice. Dan! Official policy in the forward areas put a stop to that long ago. Remember the big speech? "After a quarter million years of progress it's high time intelligent species stopped trying to eat each other..." And so on. If it misfired it would be curtains for us. Besides, the Insochi would have a replacement within a week. System Minoia's a whole lot closer than the Fed.'

'What do we know about P 30?' Quarterman asked. Except that it's in System Minoia and has a bunch of pussycats running it?'

'Not much,' said Ensor. 'I've asked my girl to have a photophone report rushed from home. But Minoia's outside the Fed. It's an "Associated Territory", whatever that means. P 30's part of it. Not much contact yet, commercial or diplomatic.'

'If that attorney's a representative specimen they sound pretty highly developed to me. Him and his "compensating factor".'

'So, what are you going to do, Dan?'
'I think there's nothing for it,' said Quarterman. 'You'll have to sound him out on a deal, Rolf. Right now, Sinn's on the wrong side, I want him on my side because those machines have got to roll again.'

Rolling was one thing the machines were certainly not doing when they flew over their next day in a pair of jet skimmers. Quarterman flew in the first one with the paramount chief, Praise. Ensor was in the second with Sinn as passenger. The trip was an excuse to get Sinn by himself. It was Ensor's job to sound the attorney out on the terms of a deal. Ensor didn't feel happy about it,

slightly turned from Ensor, his forelegs supporting him on the cockpit sill so that he could look down. As they circled above the active digging and the frustrated FE Unit the cat emitted a small sound from time to time. Even through the translation box this sounded remarkably like a miaow. His ears flicked several times in quick succession.

'Quite devastating, Ensor. Clearly my clients have every justification for complaint. Look at the proximity of that waste to the river! Quite inexcusable! I can't see any way such dumping could avoid polluting the flow and hence the sea, in due course.'

Ensor felt his mouth very dry. Some way he had to start talking to this cat about a deal.

'Do they care?' he said harshly. 'And what about the waste from their mining? They don't do anything pretty with it.'

'They don't use radioactive crackers or chemical solvents,' said the cat icily. 'And they're mining the ore because you want it. It's of no interest to them. You should be educating them, setting an example.'

'So the scenery gets spoiled for a while,' said Ensor irritably. 'Listen, the Insochi draw a very good royalty on the pronucleon we take out. It's not as if M 19 was over-populated. So this area gets spoiled, polluted. Their crops don't grow; the fish don't breed. With the credit they draw it's no problem to move some place else.'

'Typical,' Sinn murmured. 'Typical. Quite a few species are like it. You find them around. Never mind the pattern of the economy. Never mind evolution. Never mind ecology. If there's something you want, go in and get it. Spoil! Pollute! Lay waste! Don't worry, we'll pay you not to notice!'

Ensor lowered the port lateral jets to bring the skimmer round in a wide arc. Across the axis of the ellipse they were making he saw Quarterman's dark face at the window of the other skimmer. Even at that distance he read the FE Unit commander's urgent question. He ignored it.

'Listen,' he said, 'this is a fantastic operation, Sinn. The Insochi are taking a fair cut. But it's going to knock the exploitation sideways if the team's obstructed. Costs will go out of sight. If these people get the right advice and signed a consolation waiver I'm pretty sure I could persuade Commander Quarterman to recommend a pretty substantial bounty...'

A half-choked word rattled in the attorney's translator box. It sounded to Ensor like 'klyger'.

'What do you say, Sinn? Our backers could make payment anywhere you want, any way you want...'

'Sometimes this box gets the word traffic garbled,' said Sinn. 'That word you used - bounty was it? - came out as bribe.'

'Oh, come on! said Ensor. 'Let's be men of the world! What kind of fee can the Insochi pay you?'

COMPENSATING FACTOR

BY ROBERT WELLS



The box said the curious, strangled word again. Suddenly the cat yawned. Enzor jumped as the deep pink throat and sharp little teeth confronted him. The cat regarded him quietly with his green eyes. 'Don't worry, Enzor. I'll get my fee. And I'll see that my clients get good advice.'

'What's the deal, Sinn?', growled Enzor doggedly. He hadn't liked doing this. Even less, he'd liked getting caught out and reprimanded by a cat. 'Name your price.'

The cat sneered and stroked his whiskers. 'My clients' price for a consolation waiver, as said yesterday, is doubled compensation and a parallel agreement that the FEU will put in a neutraliser and a waste-disposal system that ensures full ecological protection...'

Enzor stayed silent, so the attorney went on, 'And when we've got it here, *Mister Enzor*, we'll go on to the other sectors. So you'd better advise your commander to admit he's beaten and sign up fast. And as for me—I don't have a price.'

Enzor flashed his lights at the first skimmer. The signal meant, 'We're wasting our time here, let's go.' He accelerated so hard that his passenger had to extend both delicate little hands to avoid butting the windshield.

'Justice is what the galaxy needs, Enzor,' said the cat with composure. 'Justice and recognition by the strong of the rights of the weak. A recognition by the wealthy of the needs of the poor...'

'OK, cut the speeches! You're breaking my heart. I've heard it all before. You're one of those I get the message.'

Quarterman was resigned. Now and then his frustration and anger broke the surface.

There has to be something, Rolf. I've never been any place on the goddam frontier where we couldn't negotiate a price without having our pants shredded off. If I sign a deal like that pussywats want, I'll be downgraded to grease-monkey in the engine house before the ink dries. Where the hell's that photophone report on P 30? There has to be something. Some vice? Competition? Power? Profit? What motivates them? There has to be something! Unless this goddam specimen's an angel in disguise!

Enzor checked and found the report on P 30 had come in while they were up country. He had the secretariat feed it through on the television screen. Both men read it.

'Crap,' said Quarterman. 'They know nothing about it!' Last report from Investigatory Trade Mission 628. Indications: once high degree of social order appears in mid-stage of decline. Numerous mammalian specimens dominated by cat-like higher mammal Type Fed Sim 611 of which ten sub-species identified on limited visit; dominant: klyger, lesser...'

'Hold it,' cried Enzor. 'Hold it, Dan!' The commander froze the screen. Enzor told him about the unrecognisable word which had come out of Sinn's translator box.

'Klyger. That's what it sounded like.'

'So what?'
'I don't know,' said Enzor thoughtfully. 'But he said it like it was something he hated, even feared. He was mad when he said it. Really angry. Twice.'

Quarterman attacked his well-chewed knuckle. Enzor got to his feet and strode up and down. Neither man spoke for a minute or so. Suddenly Enzor said, 'Dan, suppose Sinn's not from the dominant species. Suppose that P 30 in System Minoa has even smarter pussywats than Sinn.'

Quarterman smiled a genuine smile for the first time in two days. He thumped his table with delight. 'Rolf, get me the Fed Fleet agent on the photophone by 22.00 hours. If we can't beat 'em, let's join 'em! We're going to give Chief Pralze and his smart attorney a shock. For the first time in my life I'm going to get me an adviser. A pussywats lawyer, a klyger lawyer!'

The Fed Fleet's agent did a good job. He was surprised, certainly. There weren't too many Forward Exploitation Unit Commanders who asked for advisers to assist in negotiations with alien populations, still less advisers from non-Fed civilisations. Still, it wasn't the agent's job to question field commanders. Besides, he knew Dan Quarterman and he knew if Quarterman asked for a — what was it? — oh, yes a klyger lawyer from P 30 in System Minoa, then Quarterman must have a damn good reason for it.

So, inside forty-eight hours, the agent was able to

beam a message saying that Mister (sorry delete Mister) Roror was on special transport and would probably come in to M 19 on the next freighter. Meanwhile, Quarterman and Enzor kept the talks hobbling along, stalling for time. On the third day Pralze and his delegation, coolly advised by the cat, threatened to walk out. Quarterman had to create a diversion by starting to pull the team and its equipment out of Sector Ten for Sector Eight.

He'd calculated what would happen and he was right. The Section Eight Insoi promptly filed a consolation demand on terms similar to that filed for Sector Ten and Sinn couldn't resist staying around at base to see the reaction. These manoeuvres were fine in the short term, but the general situation through M 19 was getting serious. While the machines and robots were shut down their fuel cells had to be inhibited. Every day that passed meant that much longer before a restart achieved full capacity. There was, too, the worry of local units cut off in the field with time on their hands among increasingly disdainful and hostile populations. The relief was considerable when the fleet sent in a special freighter with the new adviser as supercargo.

Quarterman and Enzor both got out of bed early and rushed to the landing area by surface lift, unshaven and buttoning their uniforms as they went. If they had been surprised by Sinn they were fairly astounded by Roror.

'My God,' said Enzor. 'No wonder they're dominant.'

'This had better not be a joke,' hissed Quarterman. Enzor didn't comment. He was hanging over the truck's front seat hastily uncoupling the kid's safety harness similar to the one he'd fixed for Sinn in the skimmer. Roror wasn't going to need it. He was dark near as big as Quarterman, rather handsomely striped and tailed with a hard glint in his eye and a hungry-looking smile. Sinn never wore anything but his own coat of black fur and the metal collar holding the translator box, but Roror had a smart, short jacket of dressed skin that matched the black and orange stripes of his fur. Like Sinn, he had a translator box, but it was vulgarly ornate. He also had a belt with a holster with a handle like it might contain a side-arm. A pair of elaborate gloves tucked into the other side of the belt opened Enzor's eyes with disbelief.

'Hell,' said Quarterman, 'did we ask for a lawyer or a vice-admiral?'

The big cat covered the ground between himself and the welcoming committee with a couple of athletic bounds. He stood up and shook hands. His smile revealed impressive teeth and bad breath.

'Attorney Roror,' he said through his gem-studded translator box. 'I hear you're having some trouble with the locals, Commander.'

'Just a dispute on interpretation of treaty obligations,' Quarterman said. He opened the truck door and Roror climbed on to the front seat. When he'd sat down he smooched his whiskers, adjusted his gloves and holster and said, 'Treaty obligations... but really, Commander, from what I've read these Insoi are just a bunch of ignorant low-life, aren't they? Evolutionary front-runners like us shouldn't have any problem?'

Enzor couldn't keep his eyes off the attorney's strange gloves, but he noticed the commander's neck go red. Quarterman struggled to control his voice.

'The Insoi are being very shrewdly advised,' he said.

As they drove back to the base, he explained briefly the problems he had with the Sector Ten tribes and their adviser. He kept everything about Sinn low-key since the first mention that all the trouble stemmed from a specially imported P 30 lawyer made Roror below with coarse laughter. The big cat listened with continued amusement until Quarterman ended his story.

'What did you say his name is?'

'Sinn,' said the commander.

Roror thought and shook his head. 'Can't say I know him. Maybe he's from one of the provinces,' he mused.

A meeting had been fixed for 10 o'clock that morning. Roror had asked for time to study the documents and hear the tapes of previous sessions. This suited the FEU team and in particular Quarterman, who hoped to bring in his new adviser after the meeting was under way to create the maximum surprise impact.

It certainly did that; and with one or two unexpected consequences. The commander began by saying that the delegation's case had been so adroitly handled that he felt it necessary to have advice on the FEU side of the table. Sinn's arguments might at first question the whole legal basis of the standard treaty. Sinn's whiskers quivered. He sensed capitulation. He

got ready to move in for the kill. He was quite at home on the corner of Quarterman's table now. Squatting there with his tail wrapped over his hindlegs he made a hard-hitting speech full of his usual themes of exploitation, injustice and the principles of social order. Quarterman looked on him to finish, then asked Enzor to call the FEU adviser.

The effect of Roror's entry was dramatic. He'd hardly made it through the door behind Enzor when something resembling a streak of black lightning shot past his legs. It was Sinn. In spite of his bulk, the klyger attorney leapt round. He gave a shattering roar. As he shot off in pursuit Enzor saw him whip the gloves out of his belt and draw them on, then drop to all fours to get more speed. The delegates at the meeting seemed rooted in their chairs. The Insoi stared at one another in consternation.

Quarterman got up slowly. 'What the rocketing hell's going on, Rolf?'

Enzor was white-faced. He cleared his throat. 'Did you notice those gloves, chief?'

When he'd recovered from his surprise Quarterman ordered the complex sealed. It was too late. Some ten minutes later Roror returned. He was under escort of two pale-looking ensigns with side-arms drawn. The big cat and Enzor were dusted off his jacket. He had already restored the gloves to his belt.

'Commander, why don't you tell these adolescent creeps to put the poggins away.'

'What's this, Williams?' Quarterman snapped. 'What's it all about?'

Escorting Ensign Williams gulped. He looked pretty pale. He nodded at his prisoner.

'This one, sir, He... he... Williams faltered.

'He ate the black one, sir,' said the other ensign. With a little gasp Ensign Williams holstered his side-arm and fled, his hand to his mouth.

'You what!' croaked Quarterman, but he didn't really need to hear it again. He had met all kinds of behavioural problems with aliens, but never before this one. He swallowed hard and said, 'OK, Ensign. I'll deal with it. Dismiss.'

Roror roared with laughter. He took a seat on Quarterman's side of the table without being invited.

It was a little gasp Ensign Williams' dispute on P 30, Roror? said the commander angrily. 'We believe eating one another's wrong. Just your information.'

Roror belched rudely and patted his mouth. 'Do you now? You should try it sometime, Commander baby. It solves problems. Fast.'

'For crissake!' said Enzor.

'Anyway stop griping,' said the big cat. 'That Sinn was a renegade. Had no business to be here. Y'know something? He comes from a species that used to run P 30 a few thousand years ago. Ruined the place with nambypamby principles and so-called social justice and that sackful of crap! We klygers put a stop to that. Pointed the way back to our true nature. Invent the glove. Sinn's lot are well under control now. They have to stick to their own reservations. Keep out of politics. Otherwise — it's the glove.'

'I wonder how that sonofabitch worked an exit visa? Probably got a licence to go as migrant labour or au pair in another part of System Minoa and transhipped to here, the flink. Don't worry about Sinn. There'll be no enquiry, my boy! Crimes against the state are subject to summary jurisdiction on P 30.'

Roror rubbed his handpaws together. He grinned as modestly as he could grin and waved the startled humans to take their seats.

'To work! To work!' His face suddenly became serious, fierce even. Staring at the silent, trembling Insoi delegation he drew his formidable gloves from his belt and laid them, claws uppermost, on the table.

'Now then,' he said in a purr. 'Who's your chief spokesman, gentlemen?'

Chief Pralze's eyes nearly popped out of his head staring at the gloves. His lips quivered. 'I am, your honour,' he whispered.

'Good — good! Well now... Roror shuffled the papers Enzor had arranged for him. 'I think we don't have any contractual problem with you gentlemen, do we? Just a minor question of treaty interpretation. We'll soon sort that out.'

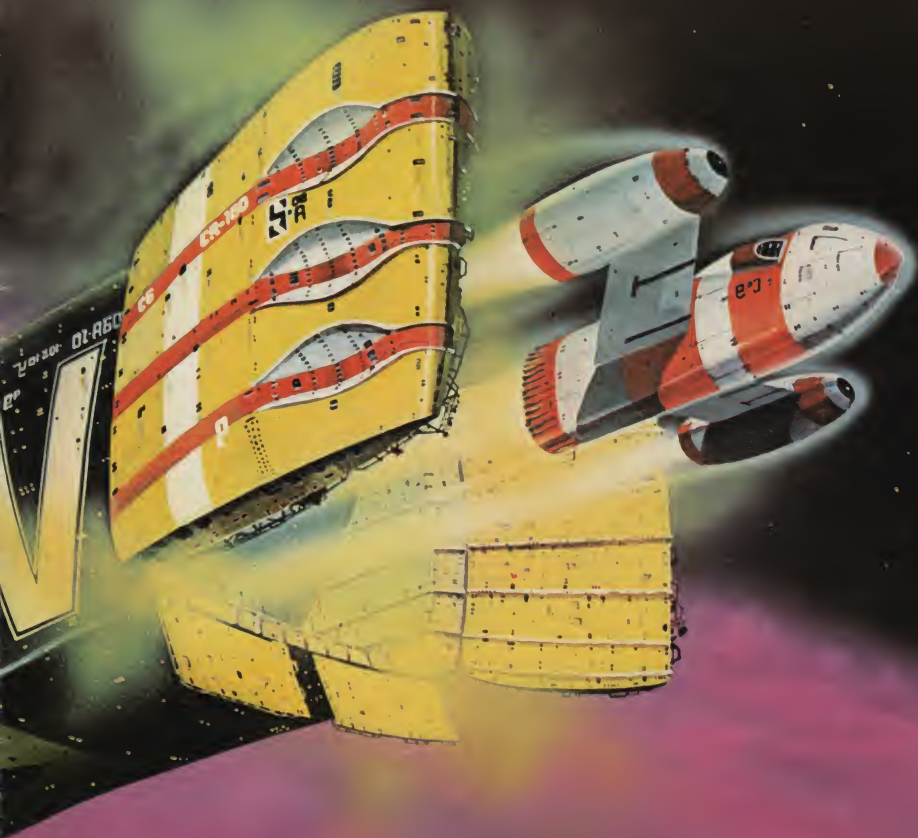
His bright eyes transfixed the tribesmen. They all nodded eagerly. Roror's whiskers trembled with satisfaction. Out of the corner of his mouth he said to Quarterman, 'Oh, before we start, Commander, how shall we fix the compensation? You're my first client outside System Minoa, so I'll make it reasonable for the courtesy of the introduction. How about twenty per cent of the on-board value of the pro-nu-cle-on?'

He pronounced the word carefully.

Quarman looked up at Enzor with resignation.

Enzor shrugged. 'Looks like this one really talks our language, Dan,' he said uneasily. ☾

Perry Rhodan No 11:
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